

MRSA

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) is a type of staph bacteria that is resistant to certain antibiotics called beta-lactams. These antibiotics include methicillin and other more common antibiotics such as oxacillin, penicillin, and amoxicillin. In the community, most MRSA infections are skin infections. More severe or potentially life-threatening MRSA infections occur most frequently among patients in healthcare settings. While 25% to 30% of people are colonized* in the nose with staph, less than 2% are colonized with MRSA (Gorwitz RJ et al. Journal of Infectious Diseases. 2008;197:1226-34.).

*Colonized:

When a person carries the organism/bacteria but shows no clinical signs or symptoms of infection. For Staph aureus the most common body site colonized is the nose.

Symptoms of MRSA

As with all regular staph infections, recognizing the signs and receiving treatment for MRSA skin infections in the early stages reduces the chances of the infection becoming severe.

Severe Infections

MRSA in healthcare settings usually causes more severe and potentially life-threatening infections, such as bloodstream infections, surgical site infections, or pneumonia. The signs and symptoms will vary by the type and stage of the infection.

Skin Infections

In the community, most MRSA infections are skin infections that may appear as pustules or boils which often are red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. They often first look like spider bites or bumps that are red, swollen, and painful. These skin infections commonly occur at sites of visible skin trauma, such as cuts and abrasions, and areas of the body covered by hair (e.g., back of neck, groin, buttock, armpit, beard area of men).

Personal Prevention of MRSA Skin Infections

Protect yourself through good hygiene.

The key to preventing MRSA infections is for everyone to practice good hygiene:

1. Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand rub.
2. Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
3. Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
4. Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.

Prevent the spread of MRSA if you have it.

Prevent spreading MRSA skin infections to others by following these steps:

1. Cover your wound.

Keep wounds that are draining, or have pus, covered with clean, dry bandages until healed. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions on proper care of the wound. Pus from infected wounds can contain staph, including MRSA, so keeping the infection covered will help prevent the spread to others. Bandages and tape can be discarded with the regular trash.

2. Clean your hands.

You, your family, and others in close contact should wash their hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub, especially after changing the bandage or touching the infected wound.

3. Do not share personal items.

Avoid sharing personal items, such as towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, or uniforms, that may have had contact with the infected wound or bandage. Wash sheets, towels, and clothes that become soiled with water and laundry detergent. Use a dryer to dry clothes completely.

4. Maintain a clean environment

Establish cleaning procedures for frequently touched surfaces and surfaces that come into direct contact with your skin.

5. Talk to your doctor.

Tell any healthcare providers who treat you that you have or had a staph or MRSA skin infection. There are things that can be done to protect people that carry staph/MRSA from getting an infection or spreading it to others when they are in the hospital or have surgery.