



Fact Sheet: MRSA (Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus)

What is *Staphylococcus aureus* (staph)?

Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to simply as "staph," are bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Approximately 25% to 30% of the population is colonized (when bacteria are present, but not causing an infection) in the nose with staph bacteria. Sometimes, staph can cause an infection. Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections in the United States. Most of these skin infections are minor (such as pimples and boils) and can be treated without antibiotics (also known as antimicrobials or antibacterials). However, staph bacteria also can cause serious infections (such as surgical wound infections, bloodstream infections, and pneumonia).

What are the symptoms?

Staph bacteria, including MRSA, can cause skin infections that may look like a pimple or boil and can be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. More serious infections may cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or surgical wound infections.

How is it spread?

Staph bacteria and MRSA can spread among people having close contact with infected people. MRSA is almost always spread by direct physical contact, and not through the air. Spread may also occur through indirect contact by touching objects (i.e., towels sheets wound dressings, clothes, workout areas, sports equipment) contaminated by the infected skin of a person with MRSA or staph bacteria.

How is it treated?

Most staph bacteria and MRSA are susceptible to several antibiotics. Most staph skin infections can be treated without antibiotics by draining the sore. However, if antibiotics are prescribed, patients should complete the full course and call their doctors if the infection does not get better. Patients who are only colonized with staph bacteria or MRSA usually do not need treatment.

How is it prevented?

Practice good hygiene:

1. Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
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.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information call your health care provider or 257-3612.

Visit our website at: www.gchd.us or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: www.cdc.gov

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