

MRSA Fact Sheet



✓ What is MRSA?

- MRSA stands for methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. *Staphylococcus aureus* (or Staph) are bacteria that are commonly found on skin surfaces of most people. These strains are resistant to commonly-prescribed antibiotics such as penicillin, amoxicillin, and cephalosporins.
- About 1 in every 3 people carries some kind of Staph (not all are MRSA) in their nose or on their skin. About 1 to 5 in every 100 people carries MRSA in their nose or on their skin and are not sick. Most of these “carriers” do not know that they carry MRSA (this is not a rare condition).
- MRSA was first identified over 40 years ago (this is not a new problem).

✓ What does MRSA infection look like?

- The most common types of infection caused by MRSA are skin infections such as abscesses, pustules, or boils that appear red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. These infections can also look like a spider bite. They usually occur in the following areas:
 - Broken skin, such as cuts and scrapes;
 - Places with hair, such as back of neck, chest, groin, armpit, and under beards or moustaches; and
 - The diaper area of young children.
- Serious infections, such as pneumonia, blood, or bone infections, are very rare in healthy people.

✓ How is MRSA infection spread?

- There are 5 “C” factors that can contribute to spread of MRSA infection:
 - CONTACT – frequent skin-to-skin contact with a person who is infected;
 - COMPROMISED SKIN – breaks in the skin allow the germs to enter more easily;
 - CONTAMINATED ITEMS and SURFACES – for example towels and shared athletic equipment;
 - Lack of CLEANLINESS – such as students not showering after athletic activities, or not washing hands regularly; and
 - CROWDING – germs spread more easily in close quarters.

✓ Who gets MRSA infection?

- MRSA infections occurs most frequently in people who are:
 - Hospitalized or in nursing homes or dialysis centers, or
 - Have chronic illnesses or are immunosuppressed.
- In addition, clusters of cases of community-associated MRSA (usually skin infections such as pimples or boils) have been seen in:

- Athletes
- Military recruits
- Prisoners
- Homeless persons
- Children
- Men who have sex with men
- Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and Alaskan Natives

✓ **How is MRSA infection treated?**

- People with MRSA infection should seek medical care for treatment. A provider will often drain the infection and may give you antibiotics. It is important to take all of your antibiotics as prescribed. Even if your lesions begin to heal, keep taking your medicine.

✓ **How can I protect myself?**

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- Shower immediately after exercising;
- Cover all cuts and scrapes with a clean, dry bandage until healed; and
- Don't share items that come into contact with bare skin (such as towels or razors).

✓ **What if a classmate, family member, or co-worker has a MRSA infection?**

- Be sure to follow the "How can I protect myself" items listed above.
- If you have a skin lesion that is red, hot, and swollen, which may be draining pus or fluid, seek medical attention.
- If you do not have any infected skin lesions, medical attention and antibiotics are not necessary.