

## MRSA

**MRSA** stands for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, a type of bacteria that is resistant to treatment with usual antibiotics and requires particular medicines, but *is treatable*.

The media has focused attention on MRSA as if it is a new problem; in fact, healthcare providers have been treating cases for years.

Patients who already have a MRSA infection or who carry the bacteria on their bodies but do not have symptoms ("colonized" with MRSA bacteria) are the most common sources of transmission.

MRSA usually appears as pustules or boils which often are red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. These skin infections commonly occur at sites of visible skin trauma, such as cuts and abrasions.

- Almost all MRSA skin infections can be effectively treated by drainage of pus with or without antibiotics. More serious infections, such as pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or bone infections, are very rare in healthy people who get MRSA skin infections.

### Preventing MRSA

MRSA is usually transmitted by direct skin-to-skin contact or contact with shared items or surfaces that have come into contact with someone else's infection.

- Keep wounds covered with clean, dry bandages until healed. Pus from infected wounds can contain bacteria including MRSA, so keeping the infection covered will help prevent the spread to others. Bandages and tape can be discarded with the regular trash.
- Clean your hands frequently. You, your family, and others in close contact should wash their hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after changing the bandage or touching the infected wound.
- Do not share personal items such as towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, or uniforms that may have had contact with the infected wound or bandage. Use a barrier (e.g., clothing or a towel) between your skin and shared equipment such as weight-training benches. Wash sheets, towels, and clothes that become soiled with water and laundry detergent. Use a dryer to dry clothes completely.
- In general it is not necessary to close schools to "disinfect" them when MRSA infections occur since healthy people can carry the bacteria on their skin. Equipment that comes in contact with skin should be cleaned regularly.

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