



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

What is *Staphylococcus aureus*?

Staphylococcus aureus (Staph) is a germ that is found on the skin (armpit, groin, and genital areas) and in the nose of many people and normally does not cause illness. When these germs enter the body through a break in the skin, they can cause small Staph infections such as, pimples and boils or serious infections such as, bloodstream infections, pneumonia, or surgical wound infections. MRSA is a specific type of Staph infection that is resistant to many kinds of antibiotics, making it more difficult to treat.

How is MRSA spread?

MRSA is spread by close contact with an infected person, either by direct skin contact or indirect contact with shared objects or surfaces, such as towels, razors, soap, wound bandages, bedding, clothes, hot tub or sauna benches, and athletic equipment. Wound drainage or pus is very infectious.

Who is at risk for MRSA?

Your risk is higher if:

- You have recurrent skin infections or open skin areas such as, scrapes and cuts
- You or a family member have previously been infected with MRSA
- You have a weakened immune system due to illness or kidney dialysis
- You are an injection drug user
- You had recent antibiotic use
- You live in crowded or unsanitary conditions
- You play in close-contact sports
- You are a man who has sex with men
- You or a family member have been a patient in a health care facility within the past year

- You have poor personal hygiene

How do I know if I have MRSA?

Symptoms of MRSA infection may include:

- Red, swollen, warm, and painful pimple, boil, or blistered areas
- Pus or other drainage
- Fever and chills
- A wound that looks like a spider bite

See your health care provider if you think you have MRSA. Your health care provider may collect a sample from the infected area and send it to a laboratory for testing. Your health care provider can then prescribe an antibiotic that is right for you.

How can MRSA be treated?

Seeing your health care provider early on will prevent the infection from becoming worse. If your health care provider prescribes an antibiotic, take it exactly as directed and be sure to finish all doses (see Antibiotic Use and Antibiotic Resistance Quick Facts).

How is MRSA prevented?

- Wash your hands properly and often. (See Hand Washing Quick Facts)
- Keep your hands from getting dry and cracked.
- Keep cuts and scrapes covered with a clean, dry bandage.
- Avoid direct contact with another person's wound, drainage, or bandages.
- Avoid contact with surfaces contaminated with wound drainage.
- Do not share personal hygiene items, such as washcloths, towels, razors, toothbrushes, soap, nail clippers, clothing, or uniforms.
- Clean shared athletic equipment and surfaces before use.
- Shower after working out.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to:

Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics (APUA)
MRSA, For Consumers

http://www.tufts.edu/med/apua/consumers/personal_home_5_890113708.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/>

This page was last reviewed July 24, 2017.