



## Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

### What is “Staph?”

“Staph” refers to bacteria called Staphylococcus aureus and is a common cause of skin infections. Staph does not always cause illness. It can be found on the skin or in the noses of many healthy people.

### What is MRSA?

MRSA is a type of Staph that is resistant to many commonly used antibiotics. Because of this, infection with MRSA can be difficult to treat.

### Who can become infected with MRSA?

Persons in hospitals or healthcare facilities, or those with underlying disease are at higher risk for developing MRSA. However, healthy people without these risk factors can also become infected with MRSA.

### If MRSA makes a person sick, what are the symptoms?

MRSA infection can cause a range of symptoms including skin and wound infections, pneumonia or bloodstream infections. Some of these illnesses can be serious and require treatment in a hospital.

### How is MRSA spread?

The Staph bacteria usually spread through direct contact via the skin of a person who has the organism (whether or not that person has symptoms). It can also live on objects or surfaces for about a day. Touching objects such as towels, sheets or sports equipment contaminated with Staph bacteria can also spread MRSA.

### How long can a person carry MRSA?

Some people can carry MRSA for days to months. In some cases, a person may continue to carry the germ even after being treated for symptoms.

### How is MRSA diagnosed?

MRSA can be diagnosed by taking a sample from certain parts of a person’s skin or nose or from an infected site and performing lab tests to determine if Staph bacteria are present. If a certain type of Staph is present, the lab then conducts tests using various antibiotics to determine if the bacteria are resistant (not able to be killed by antibiotics) or sensitive (able to be killed by antibiotics) to different antibiotics.

### What is the treatment for MRSA?

Although MRSA is usually resistant to many antibiotics, there are medications that can be used to treat it. Laboratory testing can help to determine which antibiotic will work against a particular Staph infection. In addition, newer medicines are currently being developed to treat MRSA.

### How can you reduce the spread of MRSA?

The single most important means of reducing the spread of MRSA transmission is good handwashing. Hands should be washed with soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.

## How can I prevent Staph or MRSA skin infections?

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

