

Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)

What is MRSA?

- MRSA stands for Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus, which is a bacteria.

Staphylococcus aureus (staph) is commonly found on the skin or in noses of healthy people and does not normally cause infection. MRSA is a type of staph that is resistant to antibiotics—making it more difficult to treat.

- MRSA is a common cause of minor skin infections. It can also cause more serious infections, such as pneumonia, bloodstream infections, and surgical wound infections.

Serious infections may require a hospital stay. This is true for those who cannot easily fight infection (people with weak immune systems).

You can stop the spread of MRSA by keeping your hands clean.

Where Does MRSA Come From?

- MRSA infections are found in the community, as well as in health care settings.
- Over the years the bacteria has become more *resistant* to antibiotics.

Resistant means the bacteria can no longer be killed by commonly used antibiotics.

What do MRSA Infections Look Like?

- A skin infection may be mistaken for a “spider bite.”
- The infected area is often red, swollen and painful to touch.
- Pus may drain from the infected area.

What is MRSA Colonization?

- Colonization means that MRSA is present on or in the body without causing infection or an illness.
- People who are either colonized or infected can spread MRSA to other people.
- MRSA infection may spread to other areas of the body.

How is MRSA Spread?

- By not washing your hands frequently!
- By touching someone with an MRSA infection and not washing your hands.
- By touching anything contaminated with MRSA and not washing your hands.

What Should You do if You Think You May Have MRSA?

- The only way to be certain is to consult with a doctor.
A doctor will determine the best type of treatment.

What Can You do to Stop the Spread of MRSA?

- Keep your hands clean by washing well and often.
- Keep cuts clean and covered with a proper dressing or bandage until they are healed.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or anything contaminated by a wound.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as razors, towels, toothbrushes, water bottles and sports equipment that directly touch your body.
- Clean objects such as gym and sports equipment before and after use.
- Shower with soap and water right after playing sports or working out in a gym.
- Wash dirty clothes, linens and towels with hot water and laundry detergent.
- Dry clothes in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying them.
- Do not demand antibiotics from your doctor.
- Take ALL antibiotics as prescribed.
- Do not share antibiotics with anyone else.

Adapted with permission of Metropolitan Chicago Health Care.

Resources

- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)
www.cdc.gov
- Your local health department

Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at hlc@nm.org, or by calling 312.926.5465. You may also visit the HLC on the 3rd floor, Galter Pavilion at 251 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363, the Northwestern Lake Forest Patient Relations manager at 847.535.8282 and/or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

Developed by: NMH Department of Infection Control and Prevention