Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*

*Staphylococcus aureus* (staph) is a bacteria commonly found on the skin or in the noses of healthy people that does not normally cause infection. Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is a type of staph bacteria that is resistant to many antibiotics. Resistant bacteria can no longer be killed by commonly used antibiotics. This makes a MRSA infection 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. People with weak immune systems who cannot easily fight infection may also need to be treated in the hospital if they have a MRSA infection.

**Who can get MRSA infections**

Most MRSA infections are found in people who have been in hospitals or other healthcare settings. MRSA infections can also be found in healthy people in the community.

**What MRSA infections look like**

The infected area is often red, swollen and painful to touch. A skin infection may look like a pimple or be mistaken for a “spider bite.” Sometimes, pus may drain from the infected area.

**MRSA colonization**

Colonization means that MRSA is present on or in your body, but you are not sick with a MRSA infection. If you are colonized or infected with MRSA, you can spread it. If you are colonized or infected with MRSA, you can spread it to other people. A MRSA infection may also spread to other areas of your body.

**How MRSA is spread**

MRSA is spread by:

- Not washing your hands frequently
- Touching someone with a MRSA infection and not washing your hands
- Touching a surface contaminated with MRSA and not washing your hands
What to do if you think you may have a MRSA infection

If you think you have a MRSA infection, contact your physician. Your physician will decide the best treatment for you.

How you can stop MRSA from spreading

To prevent MRSA infections:

- Keep your hands clean by washing them well and often
- Use a paper towel to dry your hands or a cloth specifically for this purpose
- Keep cuts clean and covered with a dressing or bandage until they are healed
- Avoid contact with other people’s wounds or any surface 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 instead of air drying them
- Do not demand antibiotics from your physician
- Take all antibiotics as prescribed
- Do not share antibiotics with anyone else

For additional tips on how to stop the spread of MRSA:

- Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at cdc.gov/mrsa/community/index.html
- Contact your local health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health at 217.782.2016