

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

## 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 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).

### Where Does MRSA Come From?

- MRSA infections are found in the community (often, where there are crowds of people), 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 common 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/ncidod/dhqp/ar\\_mrsa\\_ca\\_public.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_ca_public.html).
- Your local health department.

*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 312-944-2358 and/or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312-926-1920, TDD/TTY 312-695-3661.

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