

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

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](https://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/community/index.html)
- Contact your local health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health at 217.782.2016