

# Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

## Personal Health Fact Sheet

### ***What is Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)?***

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA, is a type of *Staphylococcus* bacterium that has developed resistance to the antibiotics usually used to treat the infection including methicillin and other penicillins.

*Staphylococcus aureus*, often referred to simply as “staph”, are bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people.

### **How is it spread?**

*S. aureus*, including MRSA, can be spread among people having contact (direct or indirect) with a person who either has a wound infection, an infection of the respiratory tract, or who is colonized with the bacteria. MRSA is almost always spread by direct physical contact, not through the air. Spread may also occur through indirect contact by touching objects (e.g., towels, wound dressings, workout equipment, sheets) contaminated by the infected skin of a person with “staph” bacteria or MRSA.

Anyone can get MRSA, but it is found most often among persons in hospitals and healthcare facilities (such as nursing homes and dialysis centers) who have weakened immune systems.

### **How is it treated?**

There are antibiotics available that are effective in treating a MRSA infection. Laboratory tests are generally done to determine which antibiotic should be given. It is important to take all of the doses of antibiotic, even if the infection is getting better. Do not share antibiotics with others, or save unfinished antibiotics to use at another time.

MRSA can be difficult to treat and it is possible, though rare, for the infection to progress to life-threatening blood or bone infections or pneumonia.

### **How can MRSA be prevented?**

- ▶ Careful handwashing is the most effective way to control the spread of MRSA
- ▶ Covering your wound with clean, dry bandages. Anyone caring for the wound should wear gloves.
- ▶ Do not share personal items such as towels, razors, or clothing that may have had contact with the infected wound. Wash all towels, sheets, and clothing with water and detergent.
- ▶ Tell your doctor or other healthcare providers who treat you that you have or had had a MRSA skin infection.

### **SYMPTOMS OF MRSA**

Infections cause a wide range of symptoms based on the part of the body that is infected.

- ▶ Redness, swelling, pus and tenderness at the site of the infection
- ▶ More serious infections may cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or surgical wound infections.



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