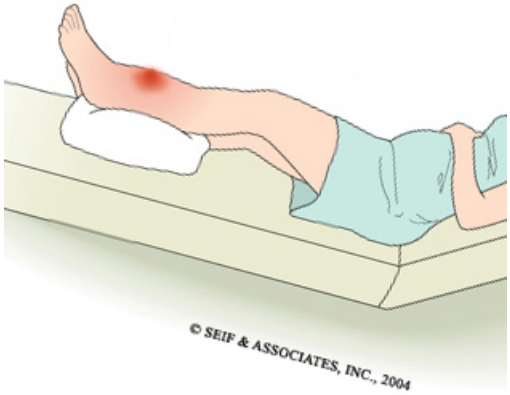
HA-MRSA (Hospital Associated-MRSA)

HA-MRSA stands for "Hospital Associated Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus." MRSA is a type of bacteria germ that is resistant to some common antibiotics and can cause infections in the skin and other places.

Staphylococcus aureus, often called "staph," are bacteria that normally live on the skin or in the nose. Up until recently, problems with staph have mainly been in hospitals. There are now more and more problems with Staph infections in the community.



Most of the time, staph bacteria do not cause problems. However, if staph bacteria enter the body through a cut or a wound, infection can happen. MRSA is a serious health problem that can cause death. Most MRSA infections are acquired in one of two ways:

- **Hospital-Associated MRSA (HA-MRSA)**:
  - Can affect people in the healthcare setting. MRSA can be a big problem for the elderly, people with weakened immune systems, dialysis patients, and those who have had surgical procedures.
- Community-Associated MRSA (CA-MRSA):
  - Community spread MRSA is becoming more common. It is known to spread in crowded settings or in situations where there is close skin-to-skin contact. MRSA can be spread through shared personal items, such as razors, towels or sports equipment.

CAUSES

Staph bacteria are normally harmless unless they enter the body through an opening into your body. HA-MRSA can spread on contaminated objects as well as through direct contact.

- HA-MRSA happens commonly among persons in hospitals and healthcare facilities.
- If someone gets an infection with MRSA, it is likely to be HA-MRSA if:
  - He/she has had frequent or recent contact with hospitals or healthcare facilities (such as nursing homes or dialysis centers) within the previous year.
  - He/she recently had an invasive medical procedure (including having a tube placed in the body such as a urinary catheter or a central line IV catheter). This means the chance of getting MRSA can be higher for someone who gets kidney dialysis, has a long term vascular access device, or has a long term urinary catheter.
  - He/she has problems with the immune system. For example, this can happen with those who have cancer or who have HIV/AIDS.
- HA-MRSA infections acquired in hospitals and healthcare settings can be severe. Certain things can put some patients at higher risk for HA-MRSA. These include:
  - Prolonged hospital stay.
  - Receiving broad-spectrum antibiotics.
  - Being hospitalized in an intensive care or burn unit.
  - Spending time close to other patients with HA-MRSA.
  - Having recent surgery.
  - Carrying MRSA in the nose without developing illness.
- The most common method of contracting HA-MRSA is direct skin-to-skin contact.
- If someone gets an infection of the skin and/or soft tissue after an operation, there is a high chance of it being caused by a HA-MRSA.
- Current research does not recommend screening every person admitted to the hospital.

DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosis of MRSA is done by cultures or special testing of fluid samples that may come from:

- Swabs from cuts or wounds in infected areas.
- Nasal swabs.
- Saliva.
- Urine.
- Blood.

Some people may be "colonized" with MRSA but have no signs of infection. This means that people can carry the MRSA germ on their skin or in their nose and do not develop an infection.

TREATMENT

- Treatment will depend on a number of things. For example:
  - Some skin infections may be treated by draining the infection.
  - Deeper or more widespread soft tissue infections are usually treated with antibiotics. This may be recommended even if the patient is pregnant. Different medicines may be used to treat CA-MRSA versus HA-MRSA.
- HA-MRSA can be serious infections that may require extended hospital treatment.
- Antibiotic treatment may last several weeks.
- Serious skin infections may require surgery.

PREVENTION

Because some people may be colonized with MRSA, preventing the spread of infection is important. The best way to prevent the spread of bacteria and germs is through proper hand washing. The following are other ways to help prevent HA-MRSA infection within the hospital and healthcare settings:

- Strict hand washing procedures are followed before and after patient care.
- Patients infected with HA-MRSA will be placed in isolation to prevent the spread of the bacteria.
- Health care workers will routinely wear protective gowns and gloves when working with patients infected with HA-MRSA.
- Hospital surfaces are disinfected frequently.
- If you are breastfeeding, talk to your caregiver about what would be recommended for you and your baby. There is some chance you will be asked to temporarily stop breastfeeding.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

Treatment may not end when you are discharged from the hospital.

- Take all medications as prescribed. Do not skip medications or stop them early just because you seem to be doing better.
- For those with HA-MRSA infections, avoid close contact with those around you. Do not use towels, razors, toothbrushes, or bedding etc. that will be used by others.
- To fight the infection, follow your caregiver's instructions for wound care.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- The infection appears to be getting worse, such as:
  - Increased warmth, redness or tenderness around a wound site.
  - A red line develops and extends from the site of infection.
  - The area around the infection begins to turn dark in color.
  - Wound drainage that is tan, yellow or green in appearance.
  - Foul smell.
- You develop nausea and vomiting or cannot keep medicine down.
- An unexplained oral temperature above 102.0°F (38.9º C) develops.
- You develop sweating and flu-like symptoms.

- You have difficulty breathing.

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