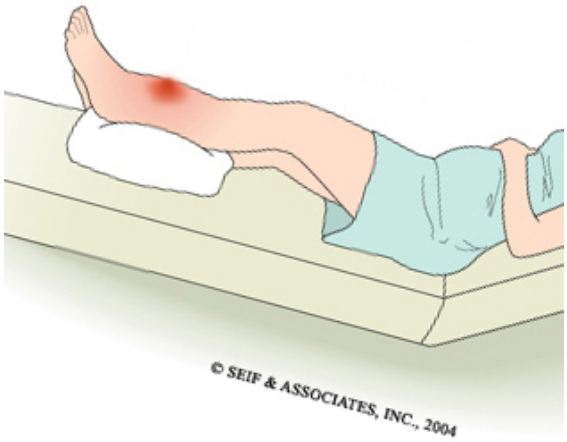
CA (Community Associated) MRSA
Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus

Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to simply as "staph", are *bacteria* (germs). They are commonly carried on the skin or in the noses of healthy people. Staph has become a common cause of skin infections. Most of these infections are minor (such as pimples and boils). Most can be treated without *antibiotics* (medications which kill germs). Serious infections such as surgical wound infections and pneumonia can also be caused by staph. In the past, most serious staph bacterial infections were treated with a penicillin-class antibiotic. Over the years, staph bacteria have become resistant to various antibiotics in the penicillin class. These resistant bacteria are called Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus, or MRSA.



Some people are colonized with MRSA. This is carrying MRSA without it causing infection. When this is the case, sometimes a special body wash and shampoo can be used. A cream may be prescribed for your nose. This is an attempt to remove and reduce the MRSA from the places where it lives. *Antibiotics* (medications which kill germs) may be prescribed if it has caused an infection.

FACTS ABOUT STAPH & MRSA

- Staph bacteria and MRSA can be found on the skin and in the nose of some people without causing illness. This is called colonization. These people can spread their germ to other people causing an illness in them without knowing it.
- Infection occurs when these germs cause disease. People also may be colonized or infected with MRSA, the staph bacteria that are resistant to many antibiotics.
- Staph bacteria can cause many different kinds of illnesses. Since MRSA is a staph bacterium, it can cause the same kinds of infection as staph. It may be a complication of hospitalization.
- MRSA causes illness in persons outside of hospitals and healthcare facilities as well. Cases of MRSA diseases in the community have been associated with recent antibiotic use, sharing contaminated towels or clothes, having active skin diseases or living in crowded settings. It is also common among IV (intravenous) drug users).
- Community-associated MRSA infections are usually skin infections, but may cause other severe illnesses.
- Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infection but are also a common cause of pneumonia and bloodstream infections.

TREATMENT

Most staph bacteria and MRSA are susceptible to several antibiotics. Most skin infections can be treated without antibiotics by draining the sore. However, if antibiotics are prescribed, patients should finish the medications. Call your caregiver if the infection does not get better. Colonized people with staph bacteria or MRSA usually do not need treatment.

SPREAD OF MRSA

Staph bacteria and MRSA can spread among people having close contact with infected people. MRSA is almost always spread by direct physical contact, not through the air. Spread may also occur through indirect contact by touching objects (towels, sheets, wound dressings, clothes, workout areas, sports equipment) contaminated by the infected skin of a person with MRSA or staph bacteria. Hospitals and nursing homes expose you to other people's germs.

You can protect yourself, friends, and family by:

- Practicing good hygiene.
- Keeping your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water.
- Keeping cuts and abrasions clean and covered with a proper dressing (bandages) until healed.
- Avoiding contact with other people's wounds or material contaminated from wounds.
- Keeping your room tidy so that it can be cleaned easily.
- Showering as frequently as you are able
- Reminding your friends and family about hand washing if they forget.
- Not sharing possessions or equipment.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Take all medications as prescribed. Do not skip medications or stop them early just because you seem to be doing better.
- Avoid close contact with those around you and do not use towels or bedding etc. that will be used by others.
- Follow your caregiver's instructions about returning to school or work.
- Follow all the precautions listed previously.
- **Wash and dry your hands:**
  - After going to the toilet and blowing your nose
  - Before and after dealing with a wound
  - Before and after assisting with personal care for any other member of your family
  - After you do household tasks such as cleaning
  - Before eating or drinking.

IF YOUR CAREGIVER HAS DIAGNOSED A SKIN INFECTION OR YOU HAD AN ABSCESS OR BOIL TREATED, SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop increased pain, swelling, redness, drainage, or bleeding in the wound site.
- The skin infection gets worse, turns dark in color, or you see a line leading away from the infection toward your heart.
- You develop signs of generalized infection including muscle aches, chills, fever, or a general ill feeling.
- An oral temperature above 102º F (38.9º C) develops, or as your caregiver suggests, and not controlled by medication.

If you are admitted for treatment to a care facility, make sure you let them know you have MRSA.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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