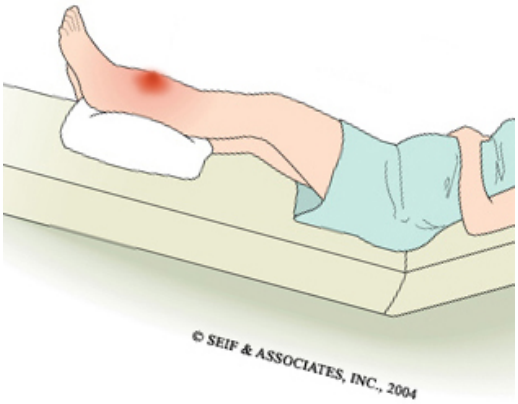
Community-Associated MRSA
Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus

Staphylococcus aureus, often called "staph," are germs (*bacteria*) carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Sometimes, staph can cause an infection. Most infections are minor (such as pimples and boils) and can be treated without medications which kill germs (*antibiotics*).
However, staph bacteria can also cause serious infections (such as surgical wound infections and pneumonia). Over the years, staph bacteria have become resistant to various antibiotics, including the commonly used penicillin-related antibiotics. These resistant bacteria are called methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA.



CAUSES

- 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 and cause illness.
- Infection happens when these germs cause disease.
- Staph bacteria can cause different kinds of illness. Since MRSA is a staph bacterium, it can cause the same kinds of infection as staph in general.
- MRSA happens commonly among persons in hospitals and healthcare facilities.
- MRSA infection usually develops in hospitalized patients who are elderly or very sick, or who have an open wound (such as a bedsore), or a tube going into their body (such as a urinary catheter or intravenous [IV] catheter). Also patients getting kidney dialysis and blood transfusions are also at risk.
- MRSA infections acquired in hospitals and healthcare settings can be severe. In addition, certain factors can put some patients at higher risk for MRSA including prolonged hospital stay, receiving broad-spectrum antibiotics, being hospitalized in an intensive care or burn unit, spending time close to other patients with MRSA, having recent surgery, or carrying MRSA in the nose without developing illness.
- 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 (infected or tainted) items, having active skin diseases, and living in crowded settings. Clusters of skin infections caused by MRSA have been described among injecting drug-users.
- Community-associated MRSA infections are usually skin infections but may cause other severe illnesses.
- Staph bacteria is a common cause of pneumonia and bloodstream infections.

Staph bacteria and MRSA can spread among people having close contact with infected people. MRSA is almost always spread by direct physical contact, and not through the air. Spreading may also happen through indirect contact by touching objects (i.e., towels, sheets, wound dressings, clothes, workout areas, sports equipment) contaminated by the infected skin of a person with MRSA or staph bacteria. It is often seen in schools, restaurants, health clubs, cruise ships and anyplace where many people gather together. It has also been found on domestic animals, dogs and cats, and picked up by their owners.

SCREENING AT CALIFORNIA-BASED MEDICAL FACILITIES (For compliance with the 2008 *Medical Facility Infection Control and Prevention Act*):
As a part of our hospital's commitment to reduce antibiotic-resistant bacteria and keep patients safe, patient's who meet specific criteria will have a culture collected from their nose in order to determine if they are carriers of the MRSA bacteria. If your culture comes back positive, nurses, doctors, and other healthcare staff will wear gowns and gloves when they come into your room. These protective measures are necessary to assure the highest level of safety for our patients.

TREATMENT

- Early treatment is most important. If you think you have MRSA, see your caregiver right away. Most staph bacteria and MRSA are susceptible to several antibiotics.
- Also, most staph skin infections can be treated without antibiotics by draining the sore. However, if antibiotics are prescribed, patients need to complete the full course and call their caregivers if the infection does not get better. Patients who are only colonized with staph bacteria or MRSA usually do not need treatment.

PREVENTION

- Practice good hygiene.
- Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and hot water.
- Keep cuts and abrasions clean and covered with a proper bandage (*dressing*) until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or material contaminated from wounds.

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.
- To fight the infection, follow your caregiver's instructions for wound care.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- The infection appears to be getting worse.
- The area around the infection begins to turn dark in color.
- A red line develops from the site of infection and extends up the arm or leg or toward the heart.
- You develop nausea and vomiting or cannot keep the medicine down.
- You develop a temperature of 101° F (38.3° C) or higher.
- You develop sweating and flu-like symptoms.
- You have difficulty breathing.

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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