

What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus ("staph") is a common type of bacteria (germ) that can be found on the skin and in the nose of healthy people. It may cause skin infections in wounds or other sites in the body. MRSA is a type of staph infection that is often found in hospitals or other healthcare settings. It is resistant to certain antibiotics making it harder to treat. A Community Acquired (CA)-MRSA infection is found in persons who have not been hospitalized or had a medical procedure such as surgery or dialysis within the past year.

How is MRSA spread?

Factors that have been associated with the spread of MRSA skin infections include: close skin-to-skin contact, openings in the skin such as cuts or abrasions, contaminated items and surfaces, crowded living conditions, poor hygiene and medical procedures or a stay in the hospital.

What do MRSA infections look like?

Staph bacteria, including MRSA, can cause skin infections that may look like a pimple or boil that can be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. More serious infections may cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or surgical wound infections.

How is MRSA treated?

Many staph skin infections may be treated by your doctor by draining the abscess or boil. This should only be done by a healthcare provider.

Other staph and MRSA infections may require treatment with antibiotics. If you are given an antibiotic, take all of the doses, even if the infection is getting better, unless your doctor tells you to stop taking it. Do not share antibiotics with other people or save unfinished antibiotics to use at another time.

If, after visiting your doctor, the infection is not better within a few days, let your doctor know. If people you know or live with seem to have the same infection, encourage them to go to their doctor.

How can MRSA be prevented?

- Practice good hygiene:
- Keep hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.
- Use a barrier between skin and shared equipment in health clubs, saunas and gymnasiums.
- Avoid illegal IV drug use.