



Hunterdon County Department of Health

Division of Public Health Nursing and Education
Division of Public Health Preparedness and Epidemiology

FAQ SHEET: Community-Associated Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (CA-MRSA)

What is CA-MRSA and who gets it?

MRSA refers to a type of bacteria (*Staphylococcus aureus*) that is resistant to many antibiotics. It is most commonly acquired in hospitals. More recently MRSA has been reported in increasing numbers among healthy persons of all ages. MRSA was first recognized in 1961, one year after the antibiotic Methicillin was introduced for treating *S. aureus* infections.

How is CA-MRSA transmitted?

Contaminated hands most often spread MRSA to others. It is often spread through skin-to-skin contact, sharing towels, equipment and other commonly shared surfaces. If an individual has the following, they are at an increased risk for acquiring MRSA: cuts, scrapes, open wounds, or skin trauma such as, turf burns or shaving nicks.

What are the symptoms of CA-MRSA?

MRSA skin infections may present in a number of forms:

- Fever
- Redness
- Local swelling
- Heat
- Inflammation of skin
- Blistered lesions or open, crusty wounds
- Infection of a hair follicle (like a pimple)
- Deeper infection below hair follicle (similar to an in-grown hair)
- Abscess, boils
- Something that often looks like a spider or insect bite
- Pus-filled mass below skin
- Pre-existing cut that becomes infected



What should I do if I think I have a staphylococcus or CA-MRSA infection?

See your healthcare provider. In the meantime, keep wounds covered with a clean dressing and wash your hands frequently to avoid spreading potential infections to others in your household.

What is the treatment for CA-MRSA?

Only take antibiotics when they are prescribed by your healthcare provider and finish the entire prescription, even if you start to feel better.

What should I do to take care of infected wounds?

- Wash hands well with soap and water before changing the bandage.
- Wear clean, disposable, nonsterile gloves if possible.
- Remove the old bandage. It can be disposed of in the regular trash, but be sure that it is in a plastic bag that is tied securely. Remember not to touch anything.
- Take off gloves, wash and dry hands.
- Put on a new, clean pair of gloves if possible.
- Apply the new bandage.
- Take off gloves, wash and dry hands.



How can I protect myself from CA-MRSA?

The best way to prevent CA-MRSA is to practice good hygiene.

- Wash your hands thoroughly with warm water and soap.
- Carry alcohol based hand cleaner with you in case soap and water are not available and use frequently.
- Avoid contact with drainage from skin lesions or persons with lesions.
- Keep cuts and lesions clean and covered with proper dressings until healed.
- Avoid sharing any personal items: athletic equipment, towels, razors, uniforms, etc.
- Wash towels in hot water and dry on hot heat.
- Regularly clean commonly touched surfaces in the home e.g. door knobs, light switches, toilet handles.
- Change sheets regularly, wash using detergents appropriate for cold or warm water
- Linens and clothing that are not soiled with body fluids, can be washed with the family's laundry.
- Linens and clothing **contaminated with body fluids and wound drainage should be washed separately** from the rest of the family's clothing.
- When picking up dirty linen or clothing, hold away from your body to prevent MRSA germs from getting onto your clothing.
- Use a barrier between skin and shared equipment e.g. exercise machines and massage tables.
- Shower after there has been substantial skin to skin contact.



Athletes and Coaches

- Disinfect equipment with an EPA registered agent.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions and check label specifications for equipment disinfection of *S. aureus*.
- Wipe surfaces of equipment before and after use, especially if the surface has become wet with sweat.
- Clean shared equipment surfaces daily.

For additional information on CA-MRSA infections you can visit the following sites:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/hip/Aresist/ca_mrsa_public.htm

Oregon State Department of Health

<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/acd/diseases/mrsa/facts.shtml>

Living with MRSA by Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department

<http://www.tpchd.org/files/library/b6b666fe2ecef1bd.pdf>

Minnesota State Department of Health

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/mrsa/index.html>

Los Angeles Department of Health Services

<http://www.lapublichealth.org/acd/MRSA/MRSAsubject.htm>

Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus Infections Among Competitive Sports Participants

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5233a4.htm>

NCAA website search for key word MRSA

<http://www1.ncaa.org>

Information for Kids with MRSA

<http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/infectionsguide/mrsa.html>