

What You Need to Know About Staph/MRSA Skin Infections



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Staph germs (*Staphylococcus aureus*) are commonly found on the skin of healthy people. Staph is the most common cause of skin infections. When staph goes deeper than the skin, it can cause serious bone and blood infections.

MRSA (Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) is staph that has developed resistance to most common antibiotics (drugs that are used to kill bacteria). MRSA can be found on the skin of healthy people. MRSA is a common cause of skin infections and it can also cause serious bone and blood infections if not properly treated. As there has been a lot of news about MRSA, this fact sheet provides information about the disease and prevention information for persons concerning potential exposure and infection.



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What is a Staph or MRSA skin infection?

It can be a pimple, rash, boil, or an open wound.

Symptoms of staph/MRSA skin infections include redness, warmth, swelling, tenderness of the skin, and boils or blisters. The infection might start small, like a pimple, and might get better on its own or develop into something more serious.



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MRSA skin infections are often misdiagnosed as spider or insect bites.

How do these skin infections spread?

MRSA or staph live on skin and can survive on objects for 24 hours or more.

MRSA is found in places where there are crowds of people (schools, jails, gyms). MRSA can directly rub off the skin of an infected person onto the skin of another person. Or, the bacteria (germs) can come off of the infected skin of a person onto a shared object or surface (like a towel or sports equipment), and get onto the skin of the next person who uses it.



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How can I prevent myself or my family members from getting infected?

Wash your hands with soap and warm water.

The cleanest person can get a MRSA infection. Keep cuts and scrapes clean with soap and water. Avoid skin contact and sharing personal items with anyone you think could have a skin infection. Use disposable gloves to take care of skin infections. Wash your hands with soap and water after removing the gloves and dispose of them carefully.

What should I do if I think I have a skin infection?

Consult your doctor or healthcare provider.

Early treatment can help prevent the infection from getting worse. Follow directions from your doctor or healthcare provider closely. If you are prescribed pills, take whole course to make sure all the bacteria are dead, even if you feel better.



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If my doctor or healthcare provider has told me that I have, or someone close to me has, a skin infection, what can I do to keep others from getting infected?

Change your bandages, clean your hands and your home.

Keep the infected area covered with clean, dry bandages. Pus from infected wound is *very* infectious.



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Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water, especially after changing your bandages or touching infected skin.

Regularly clean your bathroom, kitchen, and all other rooms, as well as your personal items. Wash clothes and other items that become soiled with hot water or bleach, when possible. Drying clothes in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying, also helps kill bacteria in clothes.

Tell any healthcare providers who treat you that you have a skin infection.



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www.lapublichealth.org/acd/mrsa.htm