

MRSA Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus

What is MRSA and why is it so serious?

Some germs that commonly live on the skin and in the nose are called staphylococcus or “staph” bacteria. Usually, staph bacteria don’t cause any harm. However, sometimes they get inside the body through a break in the skin and cause an infection. These infections are usually treated with antibiotics. When common antibiotics don’t kill the staph bacteria, it means the bacteria that have become resistant to those antibiotics. This type of staph is called **MRSA**. **MRSA is contagious and can be spread to other people through skin-to-skin contact.** **TREATMENT:** antibiotics from a health care provider and take them exactly as prescribed.



Images provided by CDC/ Bruno Coignard, M.D.; Jeff Hageman, M.H.S.

What does MRSA look like?

- Sores that look and feel like spider bites (However, MRSA is **not** caused by a spider bite.)
- Large, red, painful bumps under the skin (called boils)
- A cut that is swollen, hot and filled with pus
- Blisters filled with fluid (called impetigo)

Ways to prevent it.

1. Wash your hands often.
2. Take care of yourself: **Eat right, exercise, quit smoking, and avoid stress.**
3. Take good care of your skin.
4. Keep skin infections covered to avoid spreading MRSA to others.
5. Talk with your health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

How did I get MRSA?

Anyone can get MRSA. You can get MRSA the same way you can get a cold, such as by touching someone or something that has the bacteria on it and then touching your eyes or your nose. **Washing your hands often reduces your chances of getting MRSA. Pets can also get MRSA.**

MRSA can live on surfaces and objects for months. However, it can be killed through proper cleaning methods. Use any cleaner that has the word “**disinfectant**” on it or **mix one tablespoon bleach into one quart of water in a spray bottle and label it “bleach solution”.**

Some ways that you could get MRSA:

- Touching the infected skin of someone who has MRSA
- Using personal items of someone who has MRSA, such as towels, wash cloths, clothes or athletic equipment
- Touching objects, such as public phones or doorknobs, that have MRSA bacteria on the surface

There are two ways you can have MRSA. You can have an active infection, or you can be a carrier with bacteria living on your skin and in your nose. Even if active infections go away, you can still have MRSA bacteria on your skin and in your nose. This means you are now a carrier of MRSA.

If you have an active MRSA infection on your skin, it is contagious.

How do I stop MRSA from spreading when I'm a carrier?

- If you go to a gym, disinfect all equipment after using it.
- Shower well with antibacterial soap before and after using a public sauna, hot tub or pool and daily.
- Shower immediately after participating in sports or working out at the gym.
- Shower before any intimate skin-to-skin contact with another person. Showering will reduce the amount of bacteria on your skin and reduce the risk of spreading bacteria to the other person.

How do I stop MRSA from spreading when I have an active infection?

- Do not poke or squeeze the sores.
- If you do touch a sore, wash your hands immediately.
- Cover any infected sores with a bandage.
- Be careful not to get any pus or body fluids on surfaces or other people.
- Wear clothes that cover your bandages and sores.
- Do not go to a public gym, sauna, hot tub or pool until sores have healed.

Personal Care Guidelines

- **Wash your hands** frequently.
- Carry alcohol-based hand gel with you so you can sanitize your hands if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in a wastebasket and **wash your hands**.
- Take a bath or shower every day to reduce the amount of bacteria on you skin.
- Change your sheets and towels regularly.
- Do not share towels, razors, toothbrushes, or other personal items.
- Take care of yourself: eat right, exercise, quit smoking, and avoid stress.
- Get medical care at the first sign of infection in a cut, such as redness, swelling, pain, or pus.

ALWAYS WASH YOUR HANDS THOROUGHLY: Before preparing food, eating, or drinking.

Before and after touching your eyes, nose, mouth, genitals, sores, acne, boils, or rashes. Before and after changing bandages. Before and after smoking. Before and after blowing your nose. **After touching urine, feces, and body fluids-this includes items soiled with body fluids, such as bedding.** After cleaning the bathroom, changing your bedding, and doing laundry. **After going to the bathroom. After coughing or sneezing.** After touching things other people touch, such as phones, door knobs, or shopping carts.

WEB SITES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) www.cdc.gov

Washington State Department of Health www.doh.wa.gov/Topics/Antibiotics.htm

Your Local Health Department www.defiancecohealth.org