

# Frequently Asked Questions About MRSA

## What is MRSA?

Methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is an infection caused by bacteria that can't be treated with common antibiotics. MRSA can be found on the skin or in the nose and usually doesn't cause any problems. However, if the bacteria enter the body through a cut or sore, it can cause serious infections, such as:

- Skin or wound infections
- Pneumonia
- Bone or joint infections
- Bloodstream infections, also known as sepsis

## There are two types of MRSA:

- **Health care-associated MRSA:** During a stay in a health care facility
- **Community-associated MRSA:** Exposure to the bacteria at public places such as during sports events or at childcare centers, or sharing personal items with an infected person

## What are the causes?

- Skin-to-skin contact with someone infected with MRSA
- Touching surfaces that have the bacteria on them
- Having MRSA on your skin and getting a cut or scratch that allows the bacteria to enter the body

## What increases the risk?

- **Health care-associated MRSA:**
  - Having surgery or a procedure
  - Having an intravenous (IV) line or urinary catheter
  - Age (elderly)
  - Dialysis
  - Taking antibiotics recently
  - Living in a long-term care facility
- **Community-associated MRSA:**
  - Having an infected wound or skin ulcer
  - Weakened immune system
  - Taking antibiotics recently
  - Playing sports with skin-to-skin contact
  - Living in a crowded place
  - Sharing towels, razors or sports equipment

## What are the signs or symptoms of MRSA?

This kind of an infection is serious, but often can be treated with antibiotics and removing or replacing the CVC.

## What are the signs or symptoms of MRSA?

- A pus-filled pimple or boil
- Pus draining from your skin
- A sore (abscess) under your skin or somewhere on your body
- Fever

## How is MRSA treated?

- Antibiotics
- Surgery to drain the infection
- A hospital stay

## What are hospitals doing to prevent MRSA?

- Cleaning hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based handrub before and after caring for every patient.
- Thoroughly cleaning hospital rooms and medical equipment.
- Using contact precautions when caring for patients with MRSA.  
Contact precautions mean:
  - Whenever possible, patients with MRSA will be placed in a private room or share a room only with another patient who has MRSA
  - Health care providers and visitors wear gloves, as well as a gown over their clothing
  - When leaving the room, gowns and gloves are removed, and hands are washed with soap and water or cleaned with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
  - Remaining in your hospital room unless going for a test or procedure
  - Using antibiotics only when necessary

## What do I need to do when I go home from the hospital?

To help prevent another MRSA infection and to prevent infecting others:

- If you're taking an antibiotic, take it as instructed by your physician. Don't take half doses or stop taking it before you're supposed to.
- Wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer often, especially before and after changing your wound dressing or bandage.
- Anyone who lives with you or visits you should wash their hands.
- If you have a wound, incision or an intravascular device (such as an IV catheter or a dialysis port), you'll be instructed on how to care for it. Follow the directions.
- Don't pick at your wounds.
- Don't share items such as towels or razors.
- Wash and dry your bed linens and clothes in the warmest water temperature possible.
- Keep your bathroom clean.
- Tell all your health care providers you have MRSA.
- Go to your follow-up visits with your physician.
- If you don't understand something or have any questions, ask.