

Frequently Asked Questions About MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)

What is *Staphylococcus aureus*?

- Often called Staph, it is a type of bacteria that commonly causes skin infections.
- Staph is usually found on the skin or in the nose of healthy people.
- Staph skin infections typically look like pimples or small boils.
- Staph can also cause more serious infections such as wound infections and pneumonia.

What is MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)?

- MRSA is a type of Staph that has developed resistance to some commonly used antibiotics. This means it can be hard to treat.
- MRSA has been around for over 20 years, mostly in hospitals where the bacteria can cause serious problems like pneumonia and blood-stream infections.
- MRSA can also cause skin infections that look like typical Staph skin infections.

How is MRSA spread?

- MRSA is almost always spread by direct physical contact, not through the air
- If someone touches a wound or an area of skin of another person that contains MRSA bacteria, then he/she can get MRSA on their skin.
- If someone uses an object or touches a surface that has been contaminated with MRSA, then the bacteria can get onto their skin. Examples of shared objects include towels, sheets, workout areas and sports equipment.
- MRSA usually causes skin infections when a person has a break in the skin or other openings where bacteria can get inside the body

What do MRSA skin infections look like?

- Symptoms may include redness, warmth, swelling, pus, and pain of the infected area.
- Common skin conditions caused by MRSA include:
 - Infected cuts or hair follicles
 - Boils
 - Yellow, fluid-filled vesicles (impetigo)

How are MRSA skin infections treated?

- Most MRSA skin infections can be treated with proper wound and skin care and by using antibiotics effective against MRSA.
- Some infections require drainage of the sore. This should only be done by a healthcare provider.

How can I protect myself from becoming infected with MRSA?

- Wash thoroughly with soap and water. Also, alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used to clean hands.
- Cover cuts and abrasions with a clean bandage until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or anything skin contact with fluids from wounds.
- Do not share personal items such as towels, uniforms, and razors that directly touch your body.
- Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are shared with other persons before you use them.
- Avoid unnecessary use of antibiotics – this will help prevent bacteria from becoming resistant

What should I do if I think I have MRSA?

- If you think you have MRSA, contact your doctor as soon as possible.
- Early treatment can help prevent the infection from getting worse.
- Be sure to follow closely all instructions from your doctor and if you are given antibiotics, take all your pills, even when you start to feel better.

For more information go to:

www.harfordcountyhealth.com

www.cdc.gov