

## MRSA

**What is MRSA?** Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is a type of bacterial infection that has developed resistance to certain antibiotics. Like other “Staph” bacteria, MRSA can cause infections in the skin and other areas of the body. MRSA has been seen in hospitalized patients for many years. Recently, MRSA cases are increasingly being detected in the community. These are also resistant to some antibiotics used to treat skin infections.

**Where does MRSA come from?** Estimates show that 25-30% of people are colonized with Staph, compared to approximately 1% colonization with MRSA. Colonized people serve as carriers of the bacteria usually in the nose or on the skin, and do not have symptoms or illness.

**How do you get MRSA Infection?** Symptoms and infection with MRSA occurs when the bacteria breach the body's defense mechanisms (the skin).

**What are common symptoms of MRSA?** Often, MRSA infections involve the skin, and present as a boil or abscess, infected spider bite, or poorly healing skin abrasion. Often symptoms include swelling, redness, drainage, discomfort and possible fever.

**How is MRSA diagnosed?** Clinicians suspect MRSA if a skin infection is not improving with usual treatment regimens. Typically, a culture is obtained to confirm MRSA infection and determine the best antibiotics for treatment.

**How is MRSA treated?** MRSA infections can be treated with antibiotics. Most of the time oral and/or topical antibiotics can resolve these infections. Follow up is often needed to make sure the infection clears. More serious infections may require more intensive treatment.

**How can MRSA infections be prevented?** Good hygiene practices can minimize the risk of transmission and infection. These include:

### **Personal Hygiene**

- Wash hands frequently:
  - Use soap and water on visibly soiled areas
  - Use an alcohol based cleaner frequently (e.g. Quickcare, Purell)
- Dry hands with paper towels or an air blower
- Do not share any personal items (towels, razors, clothing, etc.)
- Shower after exercise
- Keep cuts, abrasions, etc. covered with clean, dry dressings
  - Wash hands with soap and water or an alcohol based cleaner after changing dressings
  - Bag, seal and dispose of old dressings appropriately

### **Shared Exercise Equipment**

- Spray and wipe down exercise equipment between users and at the end of the day
  - Use disinfectant spray or disinfectant wipes (e.g. Sanicloth)
  - Leave disinfectant on the surface of the equipment as recommended
- Use a protective barrier (towel, glove, clothing, etc.) between skin and shared equipment, benches, tables, etc.

### **Clothing and Laundry**

- Use clean undergarments, T-shirts and athletic wear every day
- Use fresh, clean towels every time
- Individuals with a skin infection should wear clean clothes daily

## Take Responsibility to Prevent MRSA!

Check our website: [www.uhs.berkeley.edu](http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu) to learn more about this medical concern or others.  
For an appointment [www.uhs.berkeley.edu](http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu) or call 510-642-2000 **Clinic Nurse** 510-643-7197 for advice