

## **METHICILLIN-RESISTANT *STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS* (MRSA) FACT SHEET**

### **What is *Staphylococcus aureus*?**

*Staphylococcus aureus* (staph) are bacteria commonly found on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections in the United States. Staph can cause an infection (such as pimples or boils) but most of these skin infections are minor and can be treated without antibiotics. Staph bacteria also can cause serious infections such as wounds infections from surgery.

### **What is methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)?**

MRSA is a type of bacteria that can be difficult to treat with some antibiotics such as methicillin, and other penicillins. MRSA infections, such as pimples and boils, occur most often in hospitals and health care settings but can occur in healthy people in the community.

### **How common are staph and MRSA infections?**

Staph infections are one of the most common causes of skin infections in the United States. MRSA infections occur mostly among patients in hospitals or other health care locations; however, it is becoming more common in the community setting such as schools, sports teams, prisons or places where there is frequent skin to skin contact.

### **How can you be exposed to MRSA?**

MRSA is spread most often by direct skin to skin contact. It can also spread by touching surfaces that have MRSA germs on them (for example - touching your nose, then touching a scratch or wound on the skin with contaminated fingers).

### **What types of symptoms can occur with MRSA?**

- Skin infections that may look like a pimple or boil
- The infection can be red, swollen, painful with pus and/or other drainage
- More serious infections may cause pneumonia or blood and surgical wound infections

### **What should I do if I think I have a staph or MRSA infection?**

See your health care provider.

### **Are MRSA infections treatable?**

Yes. Most staph and MRSA infections are treatable with antibiotics. However, many staph infections may be treated by your doctor and may not require antibiotics.

- Only your doctor should treat the skin infections by draining the abscess or boil
- If the infection is more serious or does not go away after draining, antibiotics should be prescribed
- Follow your doctor's instructions on how to take the antibiotics and do not share the antibiotics with other people
- If after visiting your doctor the infection is not getting better after a few days, contact your doctor again
- If other people you know or live with get the same infection, they need to go to the doctor

### **How can staph and MRSA infections be prevented?**

It is very important to practice good hygiene to prevent spreading the skin infections to others by following these steps:

- Keep your hands clean by washing with soap and water often or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a clean, dry bandage until healed
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages
- Avoid sharing personal items, such as washcloths, towels, razors, bars of soap, clothing and sports equipment
- Wash dirty clothes, linens and towels with hot water and laundry detergent. If possible, dry clothes in a hot dryer rather than air-drying. This helps kill bacteria.
- Avoid using unnecessary antibiotics

### **Can staph or MRSA skin infections come back after it is cured?**

Yes. It is possible to have a staph or MRSA skin infection come back (recur) after it is cured. To help prevent this from happening, follow the directions of your doctor while you have the infection, and follow the prevention steps (above) after the infection is healed.

### **Where can I get more information on MRSA?**

[www.dshs.state.tx.us](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us)

### **Source of Information**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)