

## MRSA transmission

### Ways you could get MRSA

- Touching infected skin of someone who has MRSA.
- Using personal items of someone who has MRSA, such as towels, razors, clothes, or athletic equipment.
- Touching objects, such as phones or door knobs, that have MRSA bacteria on the surface and then touching your nose or open sore, paper cut, etc.

### Ways to increase your chances of getting MRSA

- Using lots of antibiotics.
- Taking antibiotics without a doctor's order.
- Not following your doctor's directions when taking antibiotics (for example, skipping doses or stopping your antibiotics before finishing a prescription).
- Cuts or scrapes on your skin (skin is a barrier to infection).
- Poor hygiene.

### Active infection vs. Carrier of MRSA

1. **Active infection.** You have symptoms. Usually a boil, sore or cut that is red, swollen or pus-filled.
2. **Carrier.** No symptoms, but still has MRSA living in the nose or skin. Your doctor may say that you are "colonized" or a "carrier".

### When you go to a clinic or hospital

- If you have ever had a MRSA infection or if you are a carrier, you should tell your health care providers. They will wash their hands and wear gloves when caring for you. They may also wear a gown over their clothes and may wear a mask.
- Visitors may be instructed to avoid touching infected skin and to take other precautions such as wearing gloves or gowns.

## MRSA diagnosis

You may not be tested for MRSA unless you have an active infection. If you have a skin infection, the doctor may take a sample (culture) to find the cause of the infection. The lab will test the bacteria to find the best antibiotic.

If your MRSA infections keep returning, your doctor may test you and your family members to see if you are carriers.

## Treating MRSA

### Treatment for MRSA

- MRSA should always be treated by a doctor. You must follow the doctor's directions.
- Many people with active infections are treated effectively and no longer have MRSA.
- Sometimes MRSA goes away after treatment and comes back again.

### If you have an active MRSA infection, your doctor may use one or more of the following treatments:

1. **Antibiotics.** MRSA is resistant to many antibiotics so treatment can be difficult. However, some special antibiotics can treat MRSA. If your doctor gives you antibiotics, take them exactly as ordered. Do not stop early, even if you feel better or if the infection looks healed. The last few pills kill the toughest bacteria. Never take antibiotics without a doctor's order.
2. **Drain the infection.** Don't do this yourself. It is dangerous to squeeze or poke a skin infection because it can drive the bacteria deeper into the skin and make the infection worse. Your doctor will open and drain the sore. Then keep the sore covered with a clean, dry bandage, until it heals.
3. **Reduce the staph on your skin or in your nose.** This may prevent the spread of MRSA. To decrease the staph on your body your doctor may, for a short period of time:
  - Tell you to shower daily with antibacterial soap.
  - Prescribe antibiotic ointment to put in your nose.
  - In some cases, prescribe antibiotic pills.

## Preventing the spread of MRSA

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Bathe or shower often, using soap.
- Wash your sheets and towels at least once a week.
- Change clothes daily and wash them before wearing again.
- Do not share towels, razors, or other personal items.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean, and covered with a bandage.

- Do not touch sores; if you do, wash your hands immediately.
- Cover infected sores with a bandage. Wash your hands right away after putting on the bandage.
- Wear clothes to cover bandages and sores, if possible.
- Clean frequently used areas of your home (bathrooms, countertops, etc.) every day with a household cleaner.
- Unless directed by a physician, students with MRSA infections should not be excluded from attending school. Children should be excluded from school if they have draining wounds that can't be covered and contained with a dry bandage and if they can't maintain good personal hygiene.
- Students with active infections should be excluded from activities where skin-to-skin contact is likely to occur (e.g., sports) until their infections are healed.
- Do not use a public gym, sauna, hot tub or pool until sores have healed.

## Wash your hands often

- Wash your hands with water and soap for 20 seconds.
- Or clean hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

## Laundry

- Dirty clothes and bedding can spread MRSA bacteria.
- Change your sheets and towels at least once a week.
- Change your clothes daily and wash after wearing once.
- When touching your laundry or changing sheets, hold the dirty laundry away from your body and clothes to prevent bacteria from getting on you.
- Wear disposable gloves to touch laundry that is soiled with body fluids, like pus, urine, feces or secretions.
- Immediately put laundry into the washer or into a bag until it can be washed.
- Wash laundry with warm or hot water, using bleach.
- Dry in a warm or hot dryer making sure clothes are completely dry.
- Wash hands after touching dirty laundry and before touching clean laundry, even if you used gloves.
- Throw gloves away after use, wash your hands.

## Changing bandages

1. Wash and dry your hands.
2. Put on disposable gloves.
3. Remove the old bandage.
4. Put old bandage in a plastic bag.
5. Take off gloves and put them in the plastic bag, too.
6. Wash and dry your hands again.
7. Put on new gloves.
8. Apply new bandage.
9. Take off gloves and put them in the plastic bag.
10. Tie the bag shut and throw it into the garbage.
11. Wash your hands with soap and water.

## House cleaning

- Use household disinfectant or bleach solution to clean surfaces daily.
- Pay special attention to things that are frequently touched – light switches, doorknobs, phones, remote controls, toilets, sinks, tubs, showers and kitchen counters.
- Wipe the surface or object with the disinfectant and let dry.

### Disinfectants

- You can use any household cleaner that has the word “disinfectant” on it. Read the label and follow the directions.
- Make a solution of bleach and water:
  - Mix 2 teaspoons bleach into 1 quart of water in a spray bottle and label it “bleach solution”.
  - Make it fresh each time you clean, because the bleach evaporates out of the water making it less effective.
  - Never mix bleach with other cleaners, especially ammonia.
  - Keep bleach solution away from children and don’t put in bottles that could be mistaken for something to drink.

### Contact your doctor . . . . .

- If you have new symptoms during or after treatment for a MRSA skin infection, such as a new fever or fever that won’t go away.
- If the infection is not healing or getting worse.
- If the infection comes back.
- If you have questions.

## Remember

- Clean your hands often.
- Take good care of your skin.
- Take care of yourself: good hygiene, eat right, exercise, don’t smoke, and avoid stress.
- Keep skin infections covered to avoid spreading MRSA to others.
- If you or someone in your family has been diagnosed with MRSA, take steps to avoid spreading it to others.
- MRSA may cause physical pain and emotional stress, but it can be managed.
- MRSA can cause serious infections that can become life-threatening if left untreated.
- Talk with your doctor if you have questions or concerns.

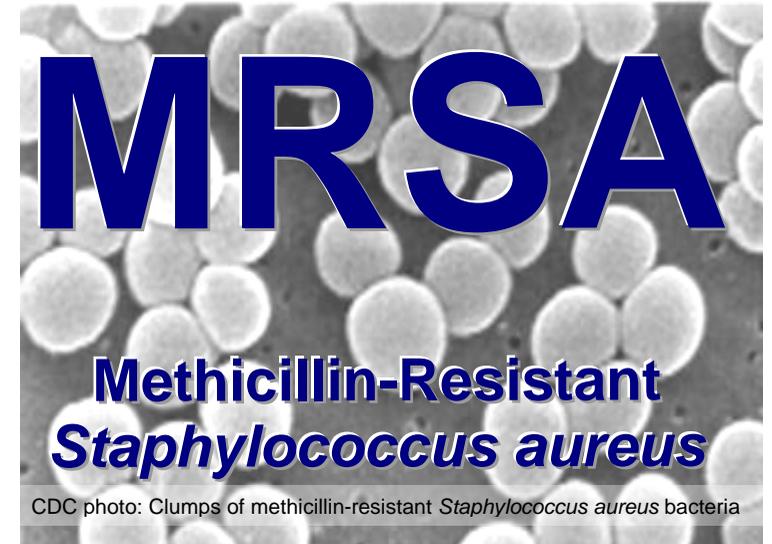


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South Dakota Department of Health website <http://doh.sd.gov/MRSA>

CDC MRSA website [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar\\_mrsa.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa.html)

Thank you to MN Dept of Health for allowing the adaptation of this brochure.



## What is MRSA?

- *Staphylococcus*, also called “staph” bacteria, live on the skin and in the nose of 25%-30% of people.
- Usually, staph is harmless. However, sometimes it can cause an infection.
- When common antibiotics don’t kill the staph bacteria, it means it has become resistant.
- This resistant type of staph is called MRSA “Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*”. Approximately 1% of people have MRSA.

## Illnesses caused by MRSA

### Most often, MRSA causes skin infections, such as:

- Red, painful bumps under the skin (boils or abscesses).
- A cut that is swollen, hot and filled with pus.
- Blisters filled with pus (impetigo).
- MRSA is most common in skin infections, but it may infect other areas, such as blood, lungs, joints, eyes, urine and surgical wounds. These types of infections are less common, but can be more serious. An estimated 94,360 people in the United States developed serious forms of invasive MRSA in 2005, with over 18,000 dying.