

# COMMUNITY-ACQUIRED MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)

## TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

### DESCRIPTION

*Staphylococcus aureus* (staph) is a type of bacteria that often lives in the nose and on the skin of healthy people and spreads from person to person on contaminated hands, skin and objects. It may cause skin infections that look like pimples or boils.

Some staph (known as Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA) are resistant to certain antibiotics, making it harder to treat. Staph/MRSA can cause serious infections such as blood and joint infections, and pneumonia. The information on this page applies to both staph and Community-Acquired MRSA.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

MRSA infections often begin as a skin lesion such as a boil and may be mistaken for a "spider bite." Skin infections caused by staph may be red, swollen, and painful or have pus or other drainage.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

Anyone can get a staph infection. People are more likely to get a staph infection if they have:

- Close skin-to-skin contact
- Openings in the skin such as cuts or scrapes
- Contact with items and surfaces that have staph on them
- Crowded living conditions
- Poor hygiene

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES AND PREVENTION OF SPREAD

- **Do not share personal items.** Avoid sharing personal items, such as towels, washcloths, clothing, bedding, bar soap, razors, and uniforms/athletic equipment. Wash sheets, towels, and clothes with water and laundry detergent. Dry clothes in a hot dryer rather than air-drying to help kill bacteria in clothes.
- **Clean.** Clean equipment and other environmental surfaces, including workout equipment, before and after use. Use an over the counter detergent/disinfectant that specifies *staphylococcus aureus* on the product label and is suitable for the type of surface being cleaned.

- **Clean your hands.** You, your family, and others in close contact should wash their hands frequently with soap and warm water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after changing the bandage or touching the infected wound.
- **Shower after working out.**
- **Use a barrier** (e.g., clothing or a towel) between your skin and shared equipment
- **If you have a lesion, cover your wound.** Keep wounds that are draining or have pus covered with clean, dry dressings to prevent the spread to others. Dressings may be thrown away with the regular trash. If you are not able to keep your wound covered with a clean, dry bandage at all times, do not participate in activities where you have skin to skin contact with other persons (such as athletic activities) until your wound is healed.
- **Talk to your health care provider.** Tell any health care providers who treat you that you have or had a staph or MRSA infection.
- **Be on the lookout for similar infections in family members and/or close contacts.**

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Other more severe manifestations such as bloodstream infections, joint infections or pneumonia are less common, but can occur.

### TREATMENT

- Incision and drainage of the lesion by a medical provider.
- Oral antibiotics, if indicated -- be sure to take all of the doses, even if the infection is getting better, unless your health care provider tells you to stop taking it. Do not share antibiotics with other people or save them to use later.
- Severe infection may require intravenous therapy.

### SEEK MEDICAL CARE PROMPTLY IF...

- You have an undiagnosed lesion
- You develop increased reddening, swelling, pain or pus in the lesion
- You develop other symptoms such as shortness of breath, fever, or chills.

Student Health Center



[WWW.SIU.EDU/~SHC](http://WWW.SIU.EDU/~SHC)

This information is for educational purposes only. Consult your doctor for specific medical advice, diagnosis and treatment.

618-453-3311

Dial-A-Nurse is available after-hours until 10:30 p.m. during fall and spring semesters. In case of emergency dial 911.