

What every parent should know about MRSA

What is MRSA?

- Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a bacterium that causes infections in different parts of the body. It is tougher to treat than most strains of Staphylococcus aureus – or Staph – because it's immune to some commonly used antibiotics.

What is *Staphylococcus aureus* or Staph?

- Staph is a type of bacteria. It may cause skin infections that look like pimples or boils. Skin infections caused by Staph may be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage.

Who gets MRSA? *Anyone!..including otherwise healthy, school-aged children.*

- The following increases one's chance of contracting MRSA:
 - Skin-to-skin contact with someone who has MRSA
 - Contact with items and surfaces that have MRSA on them
 - Openings in their skin such as cuts or scrapes
 - Crowded living conditions (such as dormitories)
 - Athletes participating in contact sports
 - Poor hygiene

How is MRSA spread?

- MRSA is almost always spread by direct physical contact with the bacteria. This may include contact with an infected person or by touching objects contaminated with the bacteria, such as towels, sheets, wound dressings, hands, clothes or sports equipment. MRSA can survive for long periods (as much as 2 weeks) on everyday surfaces if the surface is not disinfected.

How do I know if my child has MRSA?

- MRSA skin infections often look like a spider bite in the early stage. If your child has a red, swollen, painful skin lesion that has pus or other drainage he/she should be seen by a healthcare professional.

Should a child with a MRSA skin infection be allowed to attend school?

- Yes, as long as the wound can be covered with a clean, dry dressing.

How serious is MRSA?

- Most isolated MRSA skin infections are minor and may be easily treated.
- MRSA also may cause more serious infections, such as infections of the bloodstream, surgical sites, or pneumonia.
- It is important to contact your doctor if your infection does not get better.

How are MRSA infections treated?

- The best treatment is drainage of any abscess or wound. Warm compresses may be ordered to facilitate the drainage of the wound.
- An antibiotic may be prescribed. Many physicians do NOT treat simple, isolated MRSA infections with antibiotics as it facilitates newer strains of MRSA that will be harder to treat in the future. If an antibiotic is prescribed, be sure to take all of the antibiotics even if the wound has healed.

How do I keep MRSA from spreading?

- Wash your hands often or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Keep your cuts and scrapes clean and cover them with bandages.
- Do not touch other people's cuts or bandages.
- Athletes should not participate in play if they have open, draining wounds that cannot be covered and drainage contained.
- Athletes should shower after practice or games and wash uniforms after all events.
- Do not share personal items like towels or razors.

