

MRSA FACT SHEET

What is *Staphylococcus aureus*?

It is a common type of bacteria. Most refer to these bacteria as “staph” (pronounced staff). It is normal to find different types of Staph bacteria on the skin and in the nose. It is also found in our lungs and intestines.

What is MRSA?

MRSA is a type of bacteria: *Staphylococcus aureus*. MRSA is resistant to some antibiotics.

What are the symptoms of an infection with MRSA?

The symptoms of infection depend on the part of the body infected. Skin infections may result in redness, warmth, swelling, painful lesions (sores), boils and blisters. Persons may have the bacteria in their lungs so they would have symptoms of a respiratory illness: fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue. Infections can also occur in surgical wounds, burns, catheter sites, and in the blood. Sometimes persons may be a carrier of MRSA. This means it is living in their body without causing them to be sick.

How does a person get MRSA?

Skin infections often begin where there is an opening or break in the skin such as a cut or insect bite.

How is MRSA spread?

These bacteria are spread through direct contact with the hands of a health care worker or persons who are infected or are carriers of the organism. Bacteria can rub off the skin during close contact, or through touching contaminated surfaces.

How do I know if I have MRSA?

MRSA infections can be diagnosed when a health care provider obtains a sample of mucus or pus from the site of infection and submits it to the laboratory. This test sample is called a culture. If the lab finds MRSA in the test sample, the test is positive, this means that you have MRSA in or on your body. If you or any family members have symptoms as described above, you are encouraged to contact your family doctor. Treatment is not required if you do not have symptoms.

How is MRSA treated?

MRSA is treated with antibiotics (usually 7 to 10 days of antibiotics) and/or drainage of pus from the infected site. It is very important to take the antibiotics as directed by your provider.

What can be done to control the spread of MRSA?

- Encourage careful hand washing - the single most effective way to control spread of MRSA.
- Encourage frequent hand washing with soap and warm water.
- Encourage students to keep their fingernails clean and clipped short.
- Avoid contact with other people’s wounds or anything contaminated by a wound.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as razors, body jewelry, towels, deodorant, or soap that directly touch the body.
- Clean and disinfect objects (such as gym and sports equipment) before use.
- Wash dirty clothes, linens, and towels with hot water and laundry detergent. Using a hot dryer, rather than air-drying, also helps kill bacteria.
- Encourage students who participate in contact sports to shower immediately after each practice, game, or match.

- Keep open or draining sores and lesions clean and covered. Anyone assisting with wound care should wear gloves and wash their hands with soap and water after dressing changes.

Is it safe to have contact with persons who are infected with MRSA or those who may be “carriers”?

If basic hygiene precautions are followed, MRSA carriers are not a hazard to others including their family and friends.

For more information please contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 and visit our website at www.cchealth.org