

FACT SHEET Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)

What is Staphylococcus aureus?

Germs called Staphylococcus aureus are bacteria. They are often just called “staph.” Many healthy people carry staph in their noses or on their skin. Sometimes staph bacteria can cause infections. Usually these infections are skin infections like pimples and boils. Sometimes they are more serious infections like lung or blood infections.

What is Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)?

MRSA is a type of staph that has changed (become resistant) due to overuse and abuse of antibiotics. Antibiotics are drugs that kill bacteria. This resistant staph can't be killed by the usual antibiotics, like penicillin. Certain other antibiotics will still kill MRSA.

How is MRSA spread?

The bacteria enter the body through open cuts and scrapes on the skin. The bacteria usually spread when a person with MRSA on their skin comes into contact with another person's skin. Hand washing and keeping wounds covered is important in stopping a possible spread of the infection. A less common way to spread MRSA is to share towels and sports equipment.

What does a MRSA infection look like?

MRSA may cause a skin infection that looks like a pimple or boil. The infection often looks like a spider bite. It can be red, swollen, and painful. It may drain pus. If you think you may have a skin infection, see your healthcare provider. Lab tests may be run to see if your infection is caused by MRSA.

If I or someone I know has a MRSA infection, how can I keep it from spreading?

- Keep wounds that are draining covered with clean, dry, bandages.
- Clean hands regularly with soap and water or alcohol-based hand gel (if hands are not visibly soiled). Always clean hands immediately after touching infected skin or any item that has come in direct contact with a draining wound.
- Maintain good general hygiene with regular bathing.
- Do not share items that may become contaminated with wound drainage, such as towels, clothing, bedding, bar soap, razors, and athletic equipment that touches the skin.
- Wash clothing that has come in contact with wound drainage after each use and dry thoroughly.
- Clean equipment and other environmental surfaces with which multiple individuals have bare skin contact with an over the counter detergent/disinfectant that specifies Staphylococcus aureus on the product label and is suitable for the type of surface being cleaned.

How is MRSA treated?

Your healthcare provider will decide the best way to treat your infection. Some infections may need antibiotics. Tell your healthcare provider if you are not getting better in a few days. You may need to go to the hospital to receive antibiotics directly into your veins. Be sure to tell any healthcare provider you see if you have had an MRSA infection in the past. If anyone you know gets a similar skin infection, have them see their healthcare provider.

Iowa Dept of Public Health Revised 2/08 MRSA Fact Sheet

Oskaloosa School Recommendations:

- Your child may attend school after being seen by a doctor. Please present a medical excuse to the school upon their return.
- Wounds must be covered while your child is in school. This is important in stopping a possible spread of the infection.
- It is very important to take the antibiotics as prescribed by your doctor. Stopping the antibiotic too soon may lead to continued or worsening MRSA infections.