

Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

What is it?

- *Staphylococcus aureus* is a bacteria normally found on the skin and nose of healthy people. It can sometime cause infection. When the *Staphylococcus aureus* develops resistance to some antibiotics it is called Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA. MRSA occurs in the community and hospital settings.

MRSA Colonization:

- Colonization occurs when MRSA is present in or on the body, but no signs or symptoms of illness or infection are present. A colonized person is also called a carrier. They can carry bacteria for months to years.

MRSA Infection:

- Occasionally MRSA can cause infections of wounds, organs, or the blood. These serious infections can cause significant illness and complications. Healthy people are at low risk of getting an MRSA infection.

How is it spread?

MRSA can be spread by either a **colonized** or **infected** person through:

- Direct physical contact
- Contact with open sores or any break in the skin
- Contact with surfaces or objects contaminated by the bacteria (it can survive for weeks)
- Poor hygiene
- In the health care setting, it is most commonly spread by caregivers and health care worker's hands.

What are the symptoms?

- A colonized person will have no signs or symptoms.
- In the community, MRSA infections are usually skin infections that appear as a bump or infected area that may have redness, warmth, swelling,

pus and pain at the site of a sore, abrasion or cut. Fever may be present.

- If skin is not involved in the infection, symptoms may include fever, tiredness, pain and swelling of joints or bones, and cough if the infection is in the lungs.
- In the hospital, MRSA can cause life-threatening blood stream infections, pneumonia and surgical site infections.

When do symptoms start?

- It is unknown how long it takes for symptoms to appear.

Who gets MRSA?

- Anyone can be colonized with MRSA.
- People who are hospitalized, have had invasive procedures, prior antibiotic treatment, or have weakened immune systems may be at increased risk of developing an MRSA Infection.

How is it treated?

- People in the community colonized with MRSA generally do not require treatment.
- People with MRSA infections may require antibiotic treatment by their health care provider.

What precautions should I take at home?

Infected people and their caregivers should wash hands well with soap and water for 15-20 seconds, or use alcohol-based hand rub, especially:

- After using the bathroom or assisting with toileting
- After doing personal hygiene
- After blowing your nose
- Before eating and drinking
- Before and after touching a dressing or a wound
- When hands are visibly soiled
- Before leaving the home of a colonized or infected person
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels and razors.

- Cover open or draining sores if possible.
- Disposable gloves should be worn if contact with body fluids is expected.
- Linens should be changed and washed if they are soiled and on a routine basis. Clothing can be washed in the usual manner.
- Clean and disinfect the home environment when soiled with body fluids and on a routine basis.
- Notify all health care providers of your MRSA status to help prevent the spread to others.

For further information, please contact the Communicable Disease Control Program staff at 705-474-1400 or 1-800-563-2808, ext. 5229.

References:

[Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee. Feb. 2013. Annex to Routine Practices and Additional Precautions. Annex A: Screening, Testing and Surveillance for Antibiotic-Resistant Organisms \(AROs\) in all Health Care Settings. Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Toronto, Canada.](#)

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American Academy of Pediatrics. (2017). MRSA (Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*). In: Aronson SS, & Shope TR, eds. *Managing infectious diseases in child care and schools: A quick reference guide*, 3rd ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics, p. 157-158.

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