



Community-Acquired Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (CA-MRSA)

FACT SHEET 13-021-0914

What is *Staphylococcus aureus*?

- *Staphylococcus aureus* (or staph) are bacteria found on the skin and/or in the nose of healthy people.
- About 30% of people carry staph bacteria on their skin or in their nose without any problems.
- Staph is the most common type of bacteria that live on human skin.
- Staph bacteria are a common cause of skin infections.
- Most staph skin infections are minor (such as pimples or boils) and get better on their own, without medical treatment.
- Staph bacteria can cause more serious infections (such as abscesses, cellulitis, bloodstream infections, or pneumonia) that require medical treatment.

What is CA-MRSA?

- Staph bacteria that cannot be treated with several types of common antibiotics are called “methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*”, or MRSA.
- When people who are healthy and have not been in a hospital get a MRSA infection it is often called ‘community acquired’, or CA-MRSA.
- About 2% of people carry MRSA bacteria on their skin or in their nose, usually without any problems.
- If an infection is caused by MRSA, it can be more severe and more difficult to treat than an infection caused by methicillin sensitive staph.

Are some people at increased risk for CA-MRSA infections?

- People are at higher risk of getting a CA-MRSA skin infection when they participate in activities or live in places that involve crowding, skin-to-skin contact, or share towels, razors, and other items.
- Individuals at higher risk include: athletes, daycare and school students, military personnel that live in barracks, people who were recently hospitalized, and prison inmates.

What does a MRSA skin infection look like?

Most MRSA skin infections first look like a bump or area of the skin that may be:

- Red
- Swollen
- Painful or tender
- Warm to the touch
- Full of pus or fluid
- Accompanied by a fever

MRSA infections are often confused with a spider bite; however, unless a spider is actually seen, it is likely not a spider bite.

What do I do if I have MRSA symptoms?

- Cover the area with a bandage, wash your hands, and contact a doctor.
- Contact a doctor if you have MRSA symptoms plus a fever.

Finding infections early and getting care will decrease the chance that the infection will become severe.

How is MRSA treated?

- Some MRSA infections can be treated by draining the wound and may not require antibiotics.
- **Only health care providers should drain sores** (otherwise you could infect others or make the infection worse).
- Most MRSA infections are treatable with antibiotics.
- Always keep the wound covered to prevent others from getting infected.

Untreated MRSA infections can become severe and life-threatening; see a doctor as soon as you develop symptoms.

How can I prevent MRSA infections?

Take these personal hygiene steps to prevent infection:

- Keep your hands and body clean--wash your hands thoroughly and frequently, and clean your body regularly, especially after exercise.
- Keep cuts, scrapes, and wounds clean and covered until they heal.
- Do not touch other people's wounds or bandages.
- Do not share personal items such as razors, towels, and uniforms.
- Wash laundry in hot water and laundry detergent.
- Clean gym equipment, such as weight benches, before use or use a barrier such as a towel or shirt between your skin and the equipment.



Additional information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/>