

MRSA: (Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus)

What is MRSA ?

MRSA [MUR-suh] is a type of the **staphylococcus** [staf-uh-luh-KOK-uh-s] **aureus** [AWR-ee-uh-s] germ (commonly called “staph”). About 1 in 3 people have staph germs on their skin or in their nose, and normally they don’t cause problems. But sometimes, these germs cause serious infections (called “staph infections”) on the skin, in a wound, or in the blood. They can also cause pneumonia.

Antibiotics are usually used to treat staph infections however, some (like **methicillin** [meth-uh-SIL-in]) don’t kill the germs. **MRSA (methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus)** is one such type of staph that is resistant to often-used antibiotics.

Treatment involves taking antibiotics that kill MRSA germs. For some patients, surgery may be needed to drain the infection. Your healthcare providers will explain which treatments are best for you.

Who is at risk for getting MRSA?

People in the hospital are more likely to get MRSA as are those who have:

- Other health conditions making them sick
- Long or repeated stays in a hospital or nursing home
- Taken multiple antibiotics for longer periods of time

Healthy individuals who have not been hospitalized or in a nursing home can also get MRSA, usually on the skin. This type of infection is called “community-associated MRSA.” Learn more at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website (cdc.gov/mrsa).

How does MRSA spread?

In the hospital, MRSA can spread from one person to another on the hands of healthcare providers or visitors. (This is why hand washing is so important!) It can also spread by touching contaminated objects such as bed linens, bed rails, bathroom fixtures, and medical equipment. **Preventing the spread of MRSA is very important, both in the hospital (see below) and when you go home (see page 2).**

Preventing MRSA infections IN THE HOSPITAL

YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS will do these things:

- **Test you** for MRSA if they think you’re at risk. The test involves rubbing a cotton swab in your nostrils or on your skin.
- **Clean their hands** with soap and water or with hand sanitizer before and after caring for each patient (see page 2).
- **Clean all hospital rooms and medical equipment** carefully and often.
- **Put you in a private room** whenever possible.
- **Wear gloves and a protective gown** over their clothing while caring for you.

YOU can do these things:

- **Make sure all healthcare providers clean their hands** before and after caring for you (see page 2).
- **Stay in your hospital room** as much as possible. Don’t go into common areas such as the gift shop or cafeteria. (You may go to other areas of the hospital for treatment or tests.)

VISITORS TO YOUR ROOM can do these things:

- **Wash their hands** thoroughly when entering and leaving your room (see page 2).
- **Ask a healthcare provider about wearing a protective gown or gloves** while visiting you.
- **Relax.** The chance of getting MRSA while visiting you is very low.

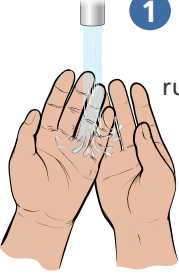

Even if you are being treated for MRSA, the bacteria can still spread to other people.

Preventing MRSA infections AT HOME

- **Take all medicines for MRSA exactly as prescribed** by your doctor. Don't take half-doses, and don't stop before you complete your prescribed medicine.
- **Wash your hands often**, especially before and after changing your wound dressing or bandage (see instructions below).
- **Make sure people who live with you wash their hands often** as well.
- **Keep any wounds clean**, and change bandages as instructed until they're healed.
- **Don't share personal items** such as towels or razors.
- **Wash and dry your clothes and bed linens** in the warmest temperatures recommended on the labels.
- **Tell all healthcare providers** that you have MRSA. This includes home health nurses and aides, therapists, and staff who work in doctors' offices.
- **Follow any other instructions your doctor gives you.**



Hand washing with soap and water

-  **1** Wet hands with warm, running water.
-  **2** Apply liquid soap or use a clean bar of soap. Lather well.
-  **3** Rub your hands together vigorously for at least 15 to 20 seconds. Be sure to scrub all surfaces of your hands and fingers.
-  **4** Rinse well. Dry your hands with a clean or disposable towel.
-  **5** Use a towel to turn off the faucet.

Hand washing with a hand sanitizer

-  **1** Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Apply it to the palm of your hand. Read the label to see how much to apply.
-  **2** Be sure to cover all surfaces of your hands and fingers. Rub your hands together until they are dry.

People can become infected if they touch surfaces that are contaminated with germs. Healthcare providers can spread the germs if they don't wash their hands often enough. If you don't see your healthcare providers clean their hands, please ask them to do so.



Questions for my doctor:

The information in this fact sheet is cosponsored by: Society of Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA), Infectious Disease Society of America (IDSA), American Hospital Association (AHA), Association for Practitioners in Infection Control (APIC), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Joint Commission.

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