

What is Staph?

Staph is the common word used for *Staphylococcus aureus*, a bacterium found on the skin or in the nose. Most people carry “staph” on their skin without signs or symptoms of infection, but if it gets into cuts or abrasions of the skin, it may cause skin or soft tissue infections. Staph occasionally causes more serious infections that require hospitalization.

MRSA (methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) is a type of staph that is resistant to many antibiotics. People in hospitals and nursing homes are at the highest risk of infection with MRSA, however a new form of MRSA called community-associated MRSA (CA-MRSA) is becoming common in the general population. Anyone can get this infection, but factors that appear to increase the chances include close skin-to-skin contact, cuts or abrasions of the skin, and contact with shared exercise equipment. Examples of persons at highest risk are football players, wrestlers, users of health clubs, military recruits, and children under age two.

CA-MRSA skin infections usually appear as pimples, boils, or abscesses and may be mistaken for “spider bites.” Most of these infections can be cured without the need for antibiotics. More serious infections may need antibiotic treatment. Your doctor is able to decide the best treatment for you.

If you have a CA-MRSA infection...

Follow instructions from your doctor.

Contact your doctor if your symptoms become worse or do not get better within a few days.

Help prevent the spread of infection to others

Wash hands often with soap and water, rubbing for at least 15 seconds before rinsing. Wash before close contact with others or after touching infected areas, used bandages, or infected body fluids. Alcohol hand sanitizers may be used if hands are not visibly dirty.

Tell others to wash their hands after close contact with you, after cleaning wounds, or after contact with used bandages or infected body fluids.

Persons caring for you should consider wearing clean, disposable gloves while cleaning wounds. Wash hands after throwing away the gloves.

Do not swim or use public hot tubs or whirlpools if you have open skin lesions even if they are covered with bandages or dressings.

Wash Hands Often



Cover wounds with clean dry dressings or bandages. If drainage cannot be contained with dressings, use disposable or cloth pads to keep nearby items and surfaces clean.

Seal heavily soiled bandages and dressings in a plastic bag before throwing into the regular trash.

Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces with a household disinfectant such as Lysol® or bleach solution (1-cup bleach plus 9-cups water). Examples are kitchen and bathroom countertops, toilets doorknobs, or other areas touched by an infected person's hands or skin.



Keep Wounds Covered

Persons with skin infections or wounds with drainage that cannot be contained by bandages or dressings should stay home from work, school, or daycare until the drainage can be contained. If you have questions, contact your local health department before going to work or sending children to school or daycare.

PREVENTION TIPS

Keep Skin Healthy

Staph is less likely to cause infections if skin is free of cuts, scratches, or abrasions.

Help keep your skin healthy by:

- wearing gardening gloves when working in the yard or sports gloves when using gym equipment.



- using a towel or clothing to act as a barrier between exercise equipment and bare skin when visiting gyms or health clubs.
- wearing clothing with long sleeves and long pants to protect skin during activities likely to cause skin damage.
- covering cuts and open sores with bandages.
- moisturizing routinely with lotions or other moisturizers to keep skin from cracking.

PREVENTION TIPS (con't)

Keep Hands and Skin Clean

Wash your hands often.

Use alcohol hand sanitizer as an easy way to wash hands when soap and water are not available.

Do not visit gyms or health clubs if skin lesions cannot be covered or wound drainage cannot be contained.

Shower as soon as possible after exercise or athletic activities.

Do not share items such as razors, towels, or clothing.

Clean surfaces of exercise and sports equipment before and after use. Ask your gym to provide cleaning supplies near equipment for easy use.

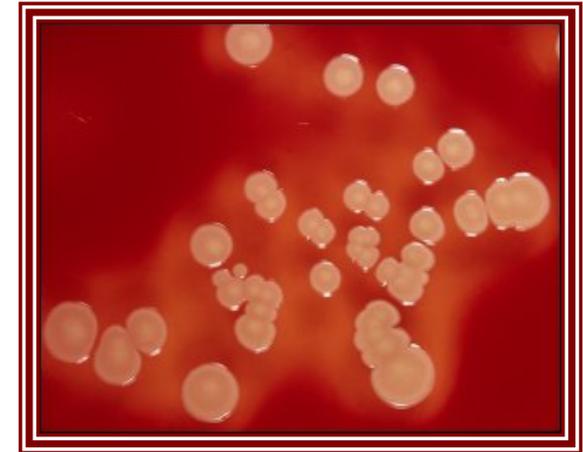
Wash clothing and linens in hot water and detergent and dry in a hot dryer before they are used by others.

Community Associated

Methicillin Resistant
Staphylococcus aureus
(CA-MRSA)

Patient Information

Prevention Tips



Division of Public Health
Bureau of Communicable
Diseases
PPH 42170 (12/08)