

Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*

What is MRSA?

Methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is a type of *Staphylococcus aureus* (or “staph”) that is resistant to penicillin-related antibiotics commonly used to treat bacterial infections. *Staphylococcus aureus* is a bacterium commonly found on the skin and inside the nose of health people; however, if it gets inside the body it can lead to infection. Since MRSA is resistant to antibiotics used to treat staph infections, it can cause serious or even life-threatening infection.

Is MRSA New?

MRSA is not new and was first reported in 1961. Historically, MRSA infections usually occurred in hospital patients who had weakened immune systems. Recently, an increased number of MRSA infections are seen in healthy individuals who have not recently been hospitalized or undergone a medical procedure (known as Community-Acquired MRSA (CA-MRSA)). Over the past couple of years there have been several cases CA-MRSA reported in the popular media, some with fatal outcomes.

How is MRSA Spread?

MRSA infections are most commonly spread by skin-to-skin contact but infection through sharing of contaminated items and touching contaminated surfaces is also thought to be possible.

Where Does MRSA Occur?

Although MRSA can occur in any setting, some settings have factors that increase the likelihood that MRSA will spread. These factors, known as the **5 C’s**, are: **C**rowding, frequent skin-to-skin **C**ontact, **C**ompromised skin (i.e., cuts or abrasions), **C**ontaminated items and surfaces, and lack of **C**leanliness. These factors are more likely to occur in schools, dormitories, locker rooms, playgrounds, day care centers, and certain athletic competitions.

What Can You Do to Prevent the Spread of MRSA?

- ✓ Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly. Experts recommend washing your hands for as long as it takes to slowly recite the alphabet.
- ✓ Keep cuts and scrapes covered with a clean bandage.
- ✓ Do not touch other people's wounds or bandages.
- ✓ Do not share personal items like towels or razors, and wipe down surfaces you come into contact with at the gym or in a locker room. Detergent-based cleaners or Environmental Protection Agency ([EPA](#))-[registered disinfectants](#) are effective at removing MRSA from environmental surfaces.

What Should You Do if You or Someone You Know has MRSA?

People who think that they may have MRSA should see their healthcare provider and follow the guidance above to avoid spreading MRSA.

Where Can I Get More Information on MRSA?

- ✓ UNR Student Health Center: <http://www.unr.edu/shc/>
- ✓ Centers for Disease Control:
 - MRSA and the Workplace: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/mrsa/>
 - CA-MRSA: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_ca_public.html#15
 - Healthcare-Associated MRSA: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa.html