

METHICILLIN RESISTANT STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS (MRSA) IN THE COMMUNITY

WHAT IS METHICILLIN-RESISTANT STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS (MRSA)?

Staphylococcus aureus is a germ that normally lives in the nose and on human skin. MRSA is a type of *Staphylococcus aureus* that is not killed by the usual antibiotics

HOW IS MRSA SPREAD?

Anyone can get an infection due to MRSA, which can be spread by touching someone or something that has the germ on it and then touching your skin or your nose.

ARE CERTAIN PEOPLE AT RISK OF GETTING COMMUNITY-MRSA?

Yes, over the past few years certain people have been found to have an increased risk of getting an infection due to MRSA including:

- Children, as they are less likely to wash their hands;
- Those involved in contact sports;
- Intravenous drug users sharing needles;
- Inmates in correctional facilities, because of close contact and sharing needles; and,
- People living in crowded conditions.

DOES EVERYBODY THAT COMES IN CONTACT WITH MRSA BECOME SICK?

No, sometimes the germ lives on the body without causing infection and does not require treatment. This is called colonization. If you have an infection with MRSA, you may need more specific treatment by a health care professional.

HOW CAN WE STOP THE SPREAD?

Basic hygiene is the best prevention...

1. Frequent handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of all germs, especially:
 - After touching the nose or mouth, and areas on the skin such as cuts, boils or pimples;
 - After touching body fluids such as urine, or things soiled with body fluids such as dirty tissues;
 - After blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing or using the bathroom;
 - Before preparing food, eating or drinking; and,
 - When hands look dirty.
2. When house cleaning:
 - Pay special attention to areas that are touched often such as door handles, telephones, etc.;
 - Use standard household cleaner; and,
 - Clean once a week and more frequently if someone is sick with an infection.
3. When sending children to daycare centres and/or schools, remind them to:
 - Clean their hands before leaving and when returning home; and,
 - Not share personal things like towels and clothing.
4. If participating in sports or athletic activities:
 - Clothing and sporting equipment (e.g. mats) should be washed or wiped down after each use; and,
 - Do not share personal items like water bottles, towels, clothing, uniforms, razors,

etc.; and,

- Take a shower after each practice or game to prevent infection with MRSA.

5. Remember the three Cs: CLEAN, COVER & CONTAIN

- Clean hands frequently;
- Cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing; and,
- Contain any illness by staying away from others.

IF AN INDIVIDUAL IS INFECTED WITH MRSA, HOW CAN THE SPREAD TO FAMILY AND OTHERS BE PREVENTED?

Making sure family members do not come in contact with sores or fluid from the sores is the best way to prevent the spread of an infection with MRSA.

If an individual has an infected skin lesion, that person must:

- Clean his or her hands with soap and water after touching the lesion and after touching any infected material such as a soiled dressings;
- Cover the lesion with a dressing to contain the drainage and seek medical care if required;
- Throw away any soiled dressing in a small bag and then throw in the garbage immediately;
- Clean the area around where the dressing was changed with household cleaner;
- Do not share soaps, creams, lotions and other personal products;
- Do not share personal items that come in contact with the skin such as razors, toothbrushes, towels, and nail files;
- Use a regular household cleaner when cleaning;
- Clothes and linens can be washed in the regular household laundry as routine laundry washing and drying destroys this germ;
- Dishes and cutlery can be washed in the usual manner with other household utensils using soap and water or the dishwasher;
- It is OK to have visitors and friends visit at home;
- If working, going to school or attending a daycare, ensure that the lesion is covered and hand are cleaned frequently.

Always remember: When going to the hospital or clinic, tell the doctor or nurse about any previous infection with MRSA in the past.

