

NJ DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)

FACT SHEET

The New Jersey Department of Human Services is providing you with this FACT SHEET on MRSA in response to recent media coverage of MRSA infections around the country. All the information in this FACT SHEET contains information obtained from state health departments, as well as, the Centers for Disease Control. As such, we compiled the following frequently asked questions:

What is MRSA?

MRSA is a type of bacterial infection that is resistant to some, but not all antibiotics. It is treatable.

MRSA is not a new disease. It has been a challenge to health care providers since the 1960s. It was first primarily associated with hospitalized patients, but in the past years has become increasingly common in the community.

Who gets Staph or MRSA infections?

Staph infections, including MRSA, occur most frequently among persons in hospitals and health care facilities (such as nursing homes and dialysis centers) who have weakened immune systems. These health care associated staph infections include surgical wound infections, urinary tract infections, bloodstream infections and pneumonia.

What is community-associated MRSA (CA-MRSA)?

Staph or MRSA can also cause illness in persons outside of hospitals and health care facilities. MRSA infections that are acquired by persons who have not been recently (within the past year) hospitalized nor had a medical procedure (such as dialysis, surgery, catheters) are known as CA-MRSA infections. Staph or MRSA infections in the community are usually manifested as skin infections, such as pimples and boils and occur in otherwise healthy people. It can sometimes look like a spider bite, boil or abscess.

How does MRSA spread?

Staph bacteria, including MRSA, can cause skin infections usually spread by skin to skin contact or by direct contact with the drainage from a wound. They may also be spread by contact with contaminated surfaces or things such as sports equipment or personal hygiene items.

Should special laundry detergent be used?

There is no need for special laundry detergent. Washing clothing in hot water with regular laundry detergent and drying in the hot air dryer will kill the bacteria.

How long can an infected person carry MRSA?

Some people can carry MRSA for days to many months, even after their infection has been treated.

How can I prevent Staph or MRSA skin infections?

Practice good hygiene. Keep hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed. Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages. Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors. Avoid using antibiotics unnecessarily. MRSA skin infections **are not** spread through the air.

If I have a Staph, or MRSA skin infection, what can I do to prevent others from getting infected?

Cover your wound. Keep wounds that are draining or have pus covered with clean, dry bandages. Pus from the infected wounds can contain staph or MRSA, so keeping the infection covered will help prevent the spread to others.

Clean your hands. You, your family and others in close contact should wash their hands regularly with soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Do not share personal items. Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, washcloths, razors, clothing or uniforms. Wash sheets, towels, and clothes that become soiled.

Talk to your doctor. Tell any healthcare providers who treat you that you have or had a staph or MRSA skin infection.

Is it possible that Staph or MRSA skin infections can recur after it is cured?

Yes, it is possible to have a staph or MRSA skin infection recur after it is cured. To prevent this from happening, follow your health care provider's instructions while you have the infection and follow the prevention steps that are outlined after the infection is gone.

What should you do if you think you have a Staph or MRSA infection?

Immediately see your health care provider.

What is the treatment for MRSA?

Most MRSA infections are treated with basic wound care and antibiotics. In part, an antibiotic in the form of treatment should be decided by your health care provider. More severe cases can usually be treated with an antibiotic called Vancomycin. Newer antibiotics are being developed to address this problem as well.

Are MRSA infections reported to health authorities?

Yes. Doctors, schools, correctional facilities and other entities are required by New Jersey Administrative Code to report suspected **outbreaks** of any disease, including MRSA, to the local health department within their jurisdiction. If there is any question, report the case to the local health department.

In addition, below are some relevant websites from our Department of Health and Senior Services.

DHSS home page: [http://www.state.nj.us/health/;](http://www.state.nj.us/health/)

MRSA page: <http://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/mrsa/index.shtml>

Strategic Plan to combat antimicrobial resistance in NJ:

http://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/mrsa/documents/mrsa_strategic_plan.pdf

Answers to commonly asked questions about preventing the spread of methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus skin infections:

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/MRSAinSchools/>

I hope the above information will answer your questions and allay any concerns you may have had about MRSA. If you have any questions regarding the above information, please contact your local health care provider.