

“Staph” and MRSA Infections Fact Sheet

What is *Staphylococcus aureus* or “staph”?

Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to simply as “staph,” are bacteria found on the skin or in the nose of 25% to 30% of healthy people. Sometimes staph bacteria can cause an infection. Staph bacteria are among the most common causes of skin infections in the United States. Staph bacteria also can cause serious infections (such as surgical wound infections, bloodstream infections, and pneumonia).

What is methicillin-resistant staph or “MRSA”?

Most staph bacteria are resistant to at least some antibiotics. MRSA is a type of staph that is resistant to a specific group of antibiotics that are often used to treat staph infections. Approximately 1% of the population carries MRSA on their skin or in their noses.

Who gets staph infections?

Anyone can get a staph infection. People are more likely to get a staph infection if they have:

- Skin to skin contact with someone who has a staph infection
- Contact with items and surfaces that have staph on them
- Openings in their skin such as cuts and scrapes
- Crowded living conditions
- Poor hygiene

How serious are staph infections?

Most staph skin infections are minor and may be easily treated. Staph also may cause more serious infections, such as infections of the bloodstream, surgical sites, or pneumonia. Sometimes, a staph infection that starts as a skin infection may worsen. It is important to contact your doctor if your infection does not get better.

How are staph infections treated?

Treatment for a staph skin infection may include taking an antibiotic or having a doctor drain the infection. If you are given an antibiotic, be sure to take all of the doses, even if the infection is getting better, unless your doctor tells you to stop taking it. Do not share antibiotics with other people or save them to use later.

How do I keep staph infections from spreading?

- Wash your hands often or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Keep your cuts and scrapes clean and cover them with bandages
- Do not touch other people’s cuts or bandages
- Do not share personal items like towels or razors

For more information, please visit: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/as_mrsa_ca.html