

METHICILLIN-RESISTANT STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS (MRSA) INFECTION

Staphylococcus aureus (staph) bacteria are commonly found in the nose and on the skin of healthy people. When staph is present on or in the body without causing illness, this is called colonization. Staph with resistance to some antibiotics (e.g., methicillin) are known as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA). When bacteria are resistant to an antibiotic it means that the antibiotic will not kill the bacteria. MRSA was first identified in healthcare facilities. MRSA is now being seen among young healthy people in the community; this is referred to as community-acquired MRSA.

CAUSE

Staphylococcus aureus bacteria resistant to some antibiotics, specifically methicillin.

SYMPTOMS

Most MRSA infections are skin infections that typically cause local redness and warmth of the infected area with or without pus/drainage. These infections commonly occur at sites of visible skin trauma, such as cuts and abrasions, and areas of the body covered by hair (e.g., back of neck, groin, buttock, armpit). Localized infections include boils, impetigo, cellulitis, and wound infections. More serious infections, such as pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or bone infections, are very rare in healthy people who get MRSA skin infections.

SPREAD

By contact with hands, skin drainage, pus, or nasal secretions of a person who is infected or colonized with MRSA.

INCUBATION (time from exposure to onset of symptoms)

Variable: a long delay may occur between colonization with staph and the onset of infection.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD

As long as infection or colonization lasts. Persons who have draining infections are shedding more bacteria and are more infectious than persons who are only colonized.

EXCLUSION

Child care and School: If draining sores are present and cannot be completely covered and contained with a clean, dry bandage or if the person cannot maintain good personal hygiene. Children who are only colonized do not need to be excluded.

Activities: Children with draining sores should not participate in any activities where skin-to-skin contact is likely to occur until their sores are healed. This means no contact sports.

TREATMENT

A child with open or draining wounds should be sent to the school nurse. Recommend that parents/guardians take child to their health care provider. MRSA is treated with antibiotics (usually 7 to 10 days of antibiotics) and/or drainage of pus from the infected site. It is very important to take the antibiotics as directed by the physician.

PREVENTION/CONTROL

- **Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water.** Wash hands often, especially after touching secretions from the nose or skin drainage of an infected person.
- Wear disposable medical gloves when touching any draining sores or changing bandages.

- Dispose of bandages in a plastic bag immediately to prevent contamination of surfaces. Close the plastic bag and dispose in the trash.
- Keep wounds clean, dry and covered with a bandage.
- DO NOT share personal items such as towels, washcloths, bar soap, combs, razors, or clothing.
- Wash bedding separately from other laundry in hot water with detergent. Dry in a hot dryer.
- Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces or objects daily or when soiled.
 - Cleaning surfaces with detergent-based cleaners or Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered disinfectants is effective at removing MRSA from the environment.
 - It is important to read the instruction labels on all cleaners to make sure they are used safely and appropriately.
 - Environmental cleaners and disinfectants should not be used to treat infections.
 - EPA products effective at killing MRSA:
<http://epa.gov/oppad001/chemregindex.htm>
- Food handlers with open sores should wear waterproof disposable gloves.

SHOULD THE ENTIRE SCHOOL COMMUNITY BE NOTIFIED OF MRSA CASES?

Contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 for guidance. Community-wide notification will likely not be necessary.

SHOULD THE SCHOOL/CHILD CARE FACILITY CLOSE?

- **No**, the school does not need to close in response to MRSA infection(s).
- Remember: MRSA infections can be prevented with simple control measures such as hand hygiene and wound/infection coverage.

For more information please contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 and visit our website at <http://cchealth.org/mrsa/>