

METHICILLIN RESISTANT *STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS*-MRSA FACT SHEET

What is *Staphylococcus aureus*?

Staphylococcus aureus, often called “staph”, are bacteria found on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Sometimes, staph can cause an infection; staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections in the United States. Most of these infections are minor (such as pimples and boils) and most can be treated without medicines such as antibiotics. However, staph bacteria can also cause serious problems. Because many infections have been treated with penicillin-related drugs in the past, some staph germs have become resistant. In other words, the drugs don’t kill these germs any more. These resistant bacteria are called methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA.

Where are staph and MRSA found?

Staph bacteria and MRSA can be found on the skin and in the nose of many people without making them sick, but these germs can still be passed on to other people who might get sick.

Who gets MRSA?

Staph germs can cause different kinds of illness, like skin infections, bone infections, pneumonia, and severe, life-threatening bloodstream infections. MRSA diseases in the community have been found in people who have used antibiotics recently; those who have shared contaminated items like towels, sheets, clothing, and razors; people having active skin diseases; those living in crowded settings; and players of close-contact sports.

How common is staph and MRSA?

Staph germs are among the most common causes of skin infections in the United States and are a common cause of pneumonia and bloodstream infections. Staph and MRSA infections do not need to be reported to public health authorities, so an exact number is not known.

Are staph and MRSA infections treatable?

Yes. Most staph bacteria and MRSA infections can be treated. Doctors can effectively treat most staph skin infections.

How are staph and MRSA spread?

Staph bacteria and MRSA can spread to people having close contact with infected people. MRSA is almost always spread by direct physical contact, and not through the air. Spread may also occur through indirect contact by touching objects like towels, sheets, bandages, clothes, workout area, and sports equipment contaminated by the infected skin of a person with MRSA or staph bacteria.

How can I prevent staph or MRSA infections?

- Cuts and breaks in the skin should be washed clean with soap and water as soon as possible, and kept clean. Waterless hand sanitizers containing alcohol are also effective for cleaning cuts.
- Follow your healthcare provider's instructions for treatment. Antibiotics need to be taken according to directions and *only* according to directions. When antibiotics are used, they should be taken to completion, even if the wound is healing. Also, do not use old, leftover antibiotics.
- Keep all infections, especially those that are draining or are pus filled, covered with clean, dry bandages.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water. People who may help change your bandages should also wash their hands with soap and warm water. Alcohol based hand cleaning products can also be used. These products are readily available in stores and can be carried in your pocket or purse.
- Avoid sharing personal items, including towels, clothes, bedding, other linens and razors.
- Wash linens and clothes with hot water and laundry detergent. Dry clothes in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying, this will help kill the germs.
- Do not lance or cut open any skin infection or boil yourself, as this could cause a worse infection. Drainage and good wound care may be all that is needed to allow an infection to heal on its own, but a medical provider needs to be seen for any skin infection or boil that looks like it needs to be drained.

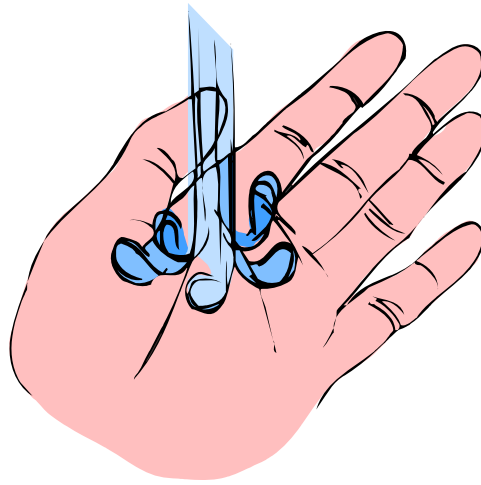
For more information view the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub_staphylococcus.htm

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

See your doctor and tell your coach.

¹ Information from <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/hip/Aresist/mrsafaq.htm>

AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION KEEPS THE GERMS AWAY



Frequent hand washing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. The most important thing you can do to keep from getting sick is to wash your hands. By washing your hands often, you wash away germs that you have picked up from other people, or from contaminated surfaces, or from animals and animal waste.

It is especially important to wash your hands

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before you eat
- After you use the bathroom
- After handling animals or animal waste
- When your hands are dirty
- More often when someone in your home is sick

What is the correct way to wash your hands?

- First, wet your hands with hot water and apply liquid or clean bar soap. Place the bar soap on a rack and allow it to drain.
- Next rub your hands vigorously together and scrub all surfaces of your hands, wrists, and forearms.
- Continue washing your skin for 15-20 seconds. It is the soap combined with the scrubbing action that helps get rid of germs.
- Rinse your arms, wrists, and hands and dry with a paper towel or use your own clean, dry towel. Do not share towels.

HOW TO PREVENT STAPH AND MRSA INFECTIONS AMONG SPORTS PARTICIPANTS

- ✓ Cover all cuts, scrapes, and boils. If a wound cannot be covered, consider excluding players with potentially infectious skin lesions from practice or competitions until the lesions are healed or can be covered.
- ✓ Encourage good hygiene, including showering and washing with soap after all practices and competitions.
- ✓ Ensure availability of adequate soap and hot water.
- ✓ Discourage sharing of towels and personal items like clothing and equipment.
- ✓ Establish routine cleaning schedules for shared equipment. Equipment can be cleaned with an industrial grade disinfectant with bleach or phenol, or a 1:10 solution of bleach and water. It is suggested that the solution be put in a spray bottle. Spray the equipment at the end of each day. Let the solution stay on the equipment for 1-10 minutes. Wipe dry with a clean cloth. Cleaning equipment between each student use is not required unless body fluids like blood or pus are present.
- ✓ Athletes and coaches should be trained in first aid for wounds and recognition of wounds that are potentially infected.
- ✓ Encourage athletes to report skin lesions to coaches and encourage coaches to assess athletes regularly for skin lesions.