



CALHOUN COUNTY

## Public Health Department

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Fact Sheet

# Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA)

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## What is methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)?

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA, is a type of *Staphylococcus* bacterium that has developed resistance to the antibiotics usually used to treat infection including methicillin and other penicillins.

*Staphylococcus aureus*, often referred to simply as “staph”, are bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people.

Approximately 5% of patients in U.S. hospitals carry MRSA in their nose or on their skin.

## Who gets MRSA?

Anyone can get MRSA, but it is found most often among persons in hospitals and healthcare facilities (such as nursing homes and dialysis centers) who have weakened immune systems. The risk increases with activities or places that involve crowding, skin-to-skin contact, and shared equipment or supplies such as athletic facilities, dormitories, military barracks, correctional facilities, and daycare centers.

## How is MRSA spread?

MRSA is almost always spread by direct physical contact with infected people, not through the air. Spread may also occur through indirect contact by touching objects (e.g., towels, wound dressings, workout equipment, sheets) contaminated by the infected skin of a person with staph bacteria or MRSA.

## Does everyone who is exposed to MRSA become infected?

No. Some people become “colonized,” meaning the bacteria are present, growing, and multiplying without observable signs of disease. Colonization can occur on the skin surface, in the nasal passage, or in the urine. Colonization can lead to infection in persons who have weakened immune systems.

Other individuals can be exposed to MRSA and never become ill or colonized.

## **What are the symptoms of MRSA infection?**

MRSA infections can cause a range of symptoms based on the part of the body that is infected. Common symptoms include:

- Red skin
- Swollen skin
- Painful skin
- Skin warm to the touch
- Skin lesions full of pus or other drainage
- Fever

## **How are MRSA infections diagnosed?**

MRSA is diagnosed when a sample of the infected wound is taken to grow the bacteria in the laboratory. Once the bacteria have grown, the laboratory will conduct tests to determine which antibiotics will effectively treat the infection.

## **What is the treatment for MRSA?**

There are antibiotics available that are effective in treating a MRSA infection. Laboratory tests are generally done to determine which antibiotic should be given. It is important to take the entire dose of antibiotics, even if the infection is getting better. Do not share antibiotics with others or save unfinished antibiotics to use at another time.

Do not attempt to treat an MRSA skin infection by yourself (popping, draining, using disinfectants); doing so could worsen or spread it to others. If you think you have a MRSA infection, cover the affected area, wash your hands, and contact a healthcare provider. Tell your doctor if your infection does not get better in a few days or if you begin to feel worse.

## **Are there complications from MRSA?**

MRSA can be difficult to treat, and it is possible, though rare, for the infection to progress to life-threatening blood or bone infections or pneumonia.

## **How can MRSA be prevented?**

You can take these steps to reduce your risk of MRSA infection:

- Maintain good hand and body hygiene. Clean hands often, and clean your body regularly, especially after exercise.
- Keep cuts, scrapes, and wounds clean and covered until healed.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels and razors.
- Get care early if you think you might have an infection.

If you have a MRSA skin infection, prevent spread to others by:

- Cover your wound with clean, dry bandages. Anyone caring for the wound should wear gloves.
- You and your close contacts should wash hands frequently with soap and warm water. After touching your infected site, wash your hands immediately.
- Do not share personal items such as towels, razors, or clothing that may have had contact with the infected wound. Wash all towels, sheets, and clothing with water and detergent. Drying items in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying, will help to kill the bacteria as well.
- Tell your doctor or other healthcare providers who treat you that you have or had had an MRSA skin infection.

### **How do I get more information on MRSA?**

Calhoun County Public Health Department

Phone: 269-969-6383

 [www.facebook.com/CCPublicHealthDepartment/](https://www.facebook.com/CCPublicHealthDepartment/)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Phone: 800-232-4636 (800-CDC-INFO)

Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/>

Spanish: [https://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/pdf/SHEA-SPAN\\_mrsa.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/pdf/SHEA-SPAN_mrsa.pdf)

*Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus*

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