

MRSA – Infection Control

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a type of bacterium that is resistant to treatment with certain antibiotics. Most of the time, MRSA causes skin infections, but it can also lead to pneumonia and bloodstream infections. In the past, MRSA occurred in hospitals and nursing homes, but it is becoming more common in community settings such as schools and day care centers. “Staph” bacteria can be found on the skin of healthy people, but only a very small percentage is MRSA.

People can become infected with MRSA by touching infected people or contaminated objects/surfaces. These bacteria can then enter the body through cuts, scrapes, or other openings in the skin. Anyone can get MRSA. It can spread easily among people who spend time in close contact such as household members and participants in close-contact sports. MRSA is **NOT** spread through the air.

High Risk Behaviors include:

- Sharing personal care items.
- Sharing clothing or uniforms that are not properly laundered, or athletic gear that is not cleaned.
- Sharing syringes, or getting tattoos and body piercings using unsterile equipment.
- Engaging in sexual activity or having close physical contact with MRSA-infected people.

Protection – Preventing and Controlling the Spread of MRSA Infections:

- Follow Universal Precautions, and treat any contact as being potentially infectious (wear latex gloves).
- Personal hygiene is very important. Wash hands frequently, shower after playing contact sports or using gym equipment, and launder clothing in hot water.
- Wipe down gym/sports equipment and exercise mats before and after use.
- Keep skin covered with clothing for additional protection.
- If you have a skin wound, be sure to cover it with a bandage.

Good Handwashing Procedures:

- Use warm water and soap, and rub hands **vigorously** for at least 20 seconds.
- Wash palms, backs, under nails, between fingers, and wrists.
- Rinse off all soap.
- Dry hands with a paper towel.
- Use the paper towel to turn off the water tap, and to open the bathroom door.
- Discard the paper towel immediately after leaving the bathroom.

If you think you have a MRSA skin infection, keep the skin sore covered with a bandage or clothing at all times, do not share clothing, towels, or personal care items, and seek medical care right away.