

Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus (pronounced staff-ill-oh-KOK-us AW-ree-us), or “Staph” is a very common germ that about 1 in 3 people have on their skin or in their nose. This germ does not cause any problems for most people who have it on their skin. But sometimes it can cause serious infections such as skin or wound infections, pneumonia, or blood infections.

When staph germs cause infections they are typically treated with antibiotics. Some Staph are **resistant**, meaning they cannot be killed by some antibiotics. “Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*” (MRSA) is a type of Staph that is resistant to some of the antibiotics that are often used to treat Staph infections.

Who is most likely to get a MRSA infection?

In the hospital, people who are more likely to get a MRSA infection are people who have:

- Other health conditions making them sick
- Been in the hospital or a nursing home
- Been treated with antibiotics

People who are healthy and who have not been in the hospital or a nursing home can also get MRSA infections. These infections usually involve the skin.

How is MRSA spread?

People who are infected with MRSA in large open wounds may spread the germ to other people. MRSA can be passed on to bed linens, bed rails, bathroom fixtures, and medical equipment. It can spread to other people on contaminated equipment and on the hands of doctors, nurses, other healthcare providers, and visitors.

Is it possible to treat a MRSA infection?

Yes, there are antibiotics that can kill MRSA germs. Some patients with MRSA abscesses (areas of pus under the skin) may need surgery to drain the infection. Your healthcare provider will determine which treatments are best for you.

What are some of the things that Michigan Medicine does to prevent MRSA infections?

To prevent MRSA infections doctors, nurses and other healthcare providers do the following:

- May treat **some** patients if they have MRSA on their skin. Treatment involves rubbing an antibiotic ointment in the nostrils twice a day for 5 days and using an antiseptic cleansing wipe on the skin each day.
- **Clean their hands** with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after caring for every patient.
- Carefully **clean hospital rooms and medical equipment**.
- Use Contact Precautions when caring for patients with MRSA infections from large open wounds. **Contact Precautions** mean:
 - Whenever possible, patients with MRSA infections from large open wounds will have a single room, or be roomed with other patients with the same infections.
 - Healthcare providers will put on gloves and wear a gown over their clothing while taking care of patients with MRSA infections from large open wounds. Visitors may also be asked to wear a gown and gloves.

- Patients on Contact Precautions are asked to stay in their hospital rooms as much as possible. They should not go to common areas, such as the gift shop or cafeteria. They may go to other areas of the hospital for treatments and tests.

If I have MRSA, can my friends and family get MRSA when they visit me?

The chance of getting MRSA while visiting a person who has MRSA is very low. To decrease the chance of getting MRSA your family and friends should:

- Read and follow any signs posted outside your door.
- Clean their hands before they enter your room and as they leave your room.
- Ask your nurse or healthcare provider if they need to wear protective gowns and gloves when they visit you.
 - It is recommended that all family/visitors wear gloves and a gown if they will be participating in your care activities. Wearing a gown will reduce the spread of germs out of the room on their clothing.
 - Family/visitors must remove gowns and gloves and clean hands before leaving the room.

What do I need to do when I go home from the hospital?

To prevent another MRSA infection and to prevent spreading MRSA to others:

- Keep taking any antibiotics prescribed by your doctor. Don't take half doses and don't stop taking your antibiotics until your prescription runs out.
- Clean your hands often, especially before and after changing your wound dressing or bandage. People who live with you should clean their hands often as well.
- Keep any wounds clean and change bandages as instructed until healed.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.
- Wash and dry your clothes and bed linens in the warmest temperatures recommended on the labels.

- Tell your healthcare providers that you have MRSA. This includes home health nurses and aides, therapists, and personnel in doctors' offices.
- Your doctor may have more instructions for you.

If you have questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.

More information about MRSA is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa>

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Adapted from: SHEA. FAQs about MRSA Access at: <http://www.shea-online.org>

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