

# Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

## PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

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### **What is MRSA?**

*Staphylococcus aureus* or “staph” are bacteria that live on the skin and in the nose, usually without causing harm. MRSA is a type of staph infection that is resistant to antibiotics that are typically used to treat this disease.

### **How is MRSA spread?**

MRSA bacteria can spread by:

- ◆ touching the infected skin or wound of anyone who has MRSA
- ◆ sharing objects such as towels or athletic equipment with someone who has MRSA

MRSA is almost always spread through physical contact, not through the air.

### **How is MRSA treated?**

Since MRSA is often resistant to many antibiotics, it can be difficult to treat. However, some antibiotics can successfully cure MRSA infections. It is important to take all of the doses of your antibiotic even if the infection is getting better. The last few pills kill the toughest germs.

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

Practice good hygiene:

- Keep hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Do not touch other people’s wounds or bandages.
- Do not share personal items such as towels or razors.
- Use a barrier between skin and shared equipment in health clubs, saunas and gymnasiums.
- Do not inject illegal drugs.

### **What does an MRSA infection look like?**

- It may look like a pimple, or a boil and can be red, swollen, painful and have pus or other drainage.
- It is often misdiagnosed as a spider bite.
- MRSA-infected skin lesions (sores) can change from skin or surface irritations to abscesses or serious skin infections.

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