



QUESTIONS QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ANSWERS

What is Staph?

Staph is short for a germ called Staphylococcus aureus (staff-el-oh-kok-us aw-ree-us). It is a common germ. One of every 3 people have it on their skin or in their nose. This germ does not cause problems for most people. People who do get staph infections can be cured by taking germ-killing medicines called antibiotics (an-t-bi-ot-iks). Staph can cause serious illness for people who are not healthy enough to fight it off. They can get lung, skin, or blood infections.

What is MRSA?

MRSA is a serious kind of staph because it is resistant to the antibiotics most often used to kill staph. Resistant means these antibiotics cannot kill the staph.

Can MRSA be treated?

Yes, there are special antibiotics that can kill MRSA. People with MRSA skin infections may need surgery to drain them.

Who is most likely to get MRSA?

The people most likely to get MRSA:

- are or have been in hospitals or nursing homes
- have other health problems besides MRSA
- have been treated with antibiotics for long periods

Can healthy people get MRSA?

People who are healthy can get MRSA. These are most often skin infections. They look like bug bites. Healthy people who get MRSA are most likely to:

- have skin to skin contact with someone who has a staph infection
- come in contact with items and surfaces that have staph on them
- have cuts or scrapes
- do not do a good job of keeping themselves clean

How is MRSA spread?

MRSA can be spread by people who have the MRSA germ but are not sick. They just carry the germ. MRSA can also be spread by people who have the germ and are sick from it. Both these groups of people can pass the germ onto:

- bed linens
- bed rails
- bathroom fixtures such as tubs, showers, sinks
- door knobs
- medical and gym equipment

It can also be spread from the hands of doctors, nurses and other healthcare givers

What are hospitals doing to prevent MRSA infections?

- Hospital caregivers may test patients for MRSA. This is a simple test. It involves rubbing a cotton tipped swab in the nose or on the skin.
- Doctors, nurses and other healthcare givers will clean their hands **before and after** treating every patient. They may use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Hospital rooms and equipment are carefully cleaned
Whenever possible patients with MRSA will have a single room
- A sign will be placed on the door of MRSA patients. The sign will tell anyone who comes into the room what they can do to prevent the spread of MRSA
- Hospital caregivers will wear gloves and a gown over their clothes while taking care of MRSA patients.
- Visitors will be asked to wear gloves and a gown.
- Hospital caregivers and visitors will take off gloves and gowns before they leave the room. They will also clean their hands.
- Visitors should not sit on a patient's bed.

- MRSA patients should stay in their 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 testing.

What can I do to help prevent MRSA infections while I am in the hospital?

- Wash your hands often. You should wash them for at least 30 seconds. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner. It should be at least 60% alcohol.
- Keep your cuts and scrapes clean. Cover them with bandages.
- Do not touch other patient's cuts or bandages.
- Do not share items such as towels or razors.

What do I need to do to prevent spreading MRSA when I go home?

- If you go home with any of the following be sure you know how to care for them.
 - wounds
 - catheters
 - dialysis ports
- Take your antibiotics as your doctor tells you. Do not take half doses. Finish all doses even if you feel better.
- Clean your hands often. This is very important before and after changing your dressing or bandage.
- People who live with you should clean their hands often as well.
- Keep wounds clean. Change bandages as you are shown until you heal.
- Do not share items such as towels or razors.
- Read the washing labels on bed linens and clothes. Use the hottest water allowed.
- Tell all healthcare givers you have MRSA. This includes home health nurses, aids, therapists and all workers in the doctor's office.
- If you have questions **ask your doctor or nurse.**
- Understand that you are within your rights to question healthcare givers about hand washing.

Finding a Doctor

Our doctors serve with a deep respect for all. Their goal is to give the best care and education whether or not a person can pay.

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