

Resources

The following websites are good resources for everyone in the community:

www.ifh-homehygiene.org: The International Scientific Forum on Home Hygiene has articles and fact sheets on MRSA, cleaning your home for MRSA, and caring for MRSA-infected family members at home.

Laundry directions to prevent infection is available at [http://www.ifh-homehygiene.org/IntegratedCRD.nsf/f5236e2da2822fef8025750b000dc985/5AF36A2C5698F561802575240056F120/\\$File/Clothing_laundry_and_home_hygiene-August2008.doc](http://www.ifh-homehygiene.org/IntegratedCRD.nsf/f5236e2da2822fef8025750b000dc985/5AF36A2C5698F561802575240056F120/$File/Clothing_laundry_and_home_hygiene-August2008.doc).

www.cdc.gov: The Centers for Disease Control has updates on MRSA risk and prevention in the U.S.

www.mayoclinic.com/health/mrsa/ID00049/NSECTIONGROUP=2: The Mayo Clinic website has information on hospital and community MRSA.



In the last few years, there have been an increasing number of MRSA infections causing severe illness and even death among healthy young people. MRSA is difficult to recognize; therefore everyone should learn preventive actions to guard against it.

What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus ('Staph') is a bacterium that is carried harmlessly by humans in the nostrils, throat, and on the skin. It usually sickens people with a compromised immune system. Among healthy persons, most Staph infections heal on their own or with antibiotics.

MRSA – Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus – is a type of Staph that has acquired the ability to resist certain antibiotics. MRSA was only a problem in hospitals until 10-15 years ago but then infections started occurring in the community.

Scientists now distinguish between healthcare-associated MRSA (**HA-MRSA**) and community-acquired MRSA (**CA-MRSA**).

Some CA-MRSA can produce a potent toxin called **PVL** which can lead to severe skin and soft tissue infections, septic arthritis, blood infections, and a rare but often fatal pneumonia.

Preventing MRSA In The Home And Community



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Who Is At Risk For MRSA?

HA-MRSA affects people with weakened immune systems, usually during long hospital stays. Persons caring for such patients can become colonized with MRSA and unknowingly carry it to family members or other patients.

CA-MRSA risk factors include:¹

- Involvement in contact sports
- Younger age (children, young adults)
- Crowded living conditions (military camps, prisons)
- Frequent antibiotic use
- Being exposed to a person with MRSA
- IV drug use
- Poverty
- Race (African American, Native American, Alaskan Natives, Pacific Islanders)
- Men who have sex with men

How Is MRSA Spread?

Hand to hand spread is thought to be a major factor in the spread of both HA-MRSA and CA-MRSA.

CA-MRSA, especially the PVL type, causes more severe illness and is more easily transmitted from person to person than HA-MRSA. It spreads by:

- Skin-to-skin contact: through cuts, abrasions, and intact skin
- Indirect contact: from sharing contaminated towels, sheets, uniforms, sports equipment



How Can You Recognize MRSA?

A lab test is required to tell whether someone is an MRSA carrier or whether a cut or wound is infected with MRSA. MRSA infections are often mistaken for spider bites because of necrotic (dead) tissue near the wound.

Signs and symptoms of **CA-MRSA** infections:

- Skin and soft tissue infections resembling pimples, abscesses, pustules, or boils
- Often in areas covered with body hair (groin, head, armpit)
- Redness, swelling, draining pus, and pain are common



Any worsening skin infection must be evaluated promptly by a physician. Complications such as deep buttock or thigh abscesses, blood stream infections, and pneumonia can be fatal. Diagnostic testing of an infection should provide an answer within *hours* in order to prescribe the right antibiotics quickly.

How Can You Prevent MRSA In Your Home?

Simple actions can reduce the chances of MRSA **entering** the home, or being **transmitted** if a contaminated family member is cared for in the home.

MRSA is most likely to enter the home from:

- Family members working in healthcare who bring home MRSA on their hands or clothing
- Patients colonized with MRSA who are discharged and cared for at home

Transmission from one person to another occurs from:

- Hands
- Hand contact surfaces: doorknobs, telephones, remote controls, light switches
- Surfaces in contact with an MRSA carrier: bed, clothing, towels, personal hygiene items. MRSA is shed in large numbers from skin scales onto surfaces. MRSA can survive up to 90 days on plastic and other hard surfaces³
- Pets in the home: cats in particular may carry MRSA

Adopting good hygiene practices on a daily basis can reduce the spread of MRSA and other infections at home. These include:

- Practice effective hand hygiene. For further information consult the brochure [Proper Hand Washing](#)
- Apply a skin antiseptic to cuts and abrasions and cover with an impermeable dressing, especially when taking part in contact sports
- Hygienically clean hand/skin-contact surfaces, especially in the bathroom and kitchen. MRSA is resistant to antibiotics but NOT to disinfectants. For a list of disinfectants approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to kill MRSA, consult <http://epa.gov/oppad001/chemregindex.htm>.
- Do not share towels, facecloths, toothbrushes, or other personal hygiene items
- Launder sheets and pillow slips regularly; launder or disinfect sports clothing and equipment after each use.
- Use a bleach-containing detergent to destroy MRSA. Unless the water is at or above 140°F, regular detergent **will not** destroy MRSA.

