

MRSA IN THE NEWS

A recent focus in the news has been on a bacterial infection that is becoming more common in the general population. The following is general information about this infection that is caused by MRSA (Methacillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus).

What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for *Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus*. MRSA is a type of Staphylococcus bacterium that has developed resistance to the antibiotics usually used to treat the infection including methicillin, ampicillin and other penicillins.

Staphylococcus aureus is a type of bacteria that can be found on the skin or mucous membranes of approximately 25 to 30 percent of the US population. Of those persons who carry *S. aureus*, only about 1 percent carry community acquired MRSA. Most people do not have symptoms of infection but simply carry staph or MRSA on their skin or in their noses. It is spread by direct person to person contact, or by contact with contaminated surfaces, equipment, or items such as used towels, razors, and bandages.

What is Community Associated MRSA (CA MRSA)?

CA MRSA infections involve strains of MRSA that can cause infections in healthy persons who have not been patients in health care facilities. CA MRSA usually causes skin infections such as pimples and boils but occasionally causes more serious infections. Some patients may think they have spider bites in the early phase of these infections.

Anyone can acquire CA MRSA infections, but children and athletes are included on the list of persons who have an increased risk/incidence of infection.

Factors that seem to increase the chances of acquiring an infection with CA MRSA are close skin-to-skin contact, cuts, cracks, or abrasions in the skin, crowded living conditions, and poor hygiene.

Staph or MRSA may cause skin infections that look like:

- Pimples, boils, or spider bites
- may be red, swollen
- painful
- have pus or other drainage

If a person develops the above signs/symptoms, it is strongly recommended to be evaluated by a licensed health care provider. Testing and treatment may be necessary.

PREVENTION

- Wash hands often or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Keep your cuts, scrapes, or open skin conditions clean and cover them with bandages
- Do not touch other people's cuts or bandages
- Do not share personal items like towels or razors
- Athletes should not participate in activities if any open wounds cannot be kept covered or drainage cannot be contained.

You can find more information at:

Centers for Disease Control

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_ca_public.html

http://www.foh.dhhs.gov/FOHNews/mrsa_public.pdf

Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services

<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/resources/consumer.htm>