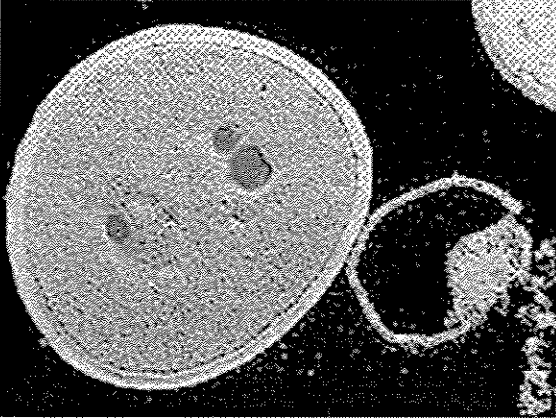


What is MRSA?



MRSA stands for **methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*** bacteria. It causes many different types of infections but skin infections are most common. Staph bacteria is nothing new but MRSA was first discovered in 1961, about 2 years after doctors began using the antibiotic methicillin to treat staph and other infectious bacteria. The smallest of cuts or abrasions on the skin can allow MRSA infection to develop. Healthy, intact skin provides a barrier to the bacteria.

How is MRSA spread?

- Physical contact with someone who is either infected or carrying the bacteria on their body.
- Physical contact with door handles, floors, sinks or towels that have been touched by a MRSA-infected person or carrier.

How do I avoid getting MRSA?

1. Do not make direct contact with skin, clothing, and any items that come in contact with either MRSA patients or MRSA carriers (towels, razors, etc.).
2. Ensure your office first aid kit is well-stocked with protective gloves, bandages and triple antibiotic ointment.
3. Treat and cover skin breaks, even minor ones.
4. Wash hands with soap after personal contact or toilet use.
5. Ensure you have alcohol-based hand sanitizer and antibacterial cleaning solution in the office. Use antiseptic solutions and wipes to clean hands and surfaces that may contact MRSA.
6. Wash clothes, towels and bedding potentially in contact with MRSA patients or carriers.
7. Wipe down shared gym equipment before use.
8. If a sore or cut becomes red, oozes, causes pain or isn't healing, see your doctor.
9. Don't insist on antibiotics for colds or other viruses. If prescribed antibiotics, take all the pills even if you feel better before they are all gone.

What are the symptoms of MRSA?

Cellulitis (an infection of the skin or fat and tissues that lie immediately beneath, usually starting as small red bumps), **Boils** (pus-filled hair follicle infections), **Abscesses** (collections of pus under the skin), **Sty** (infection of the eyelid gland), **Carbuncles** (infections larger than abscess, usually with several openings to the skin), and **Impetigo** (skin infection with pus-filled blisters).

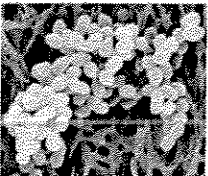
MRSA skin infections can spread to almost any other organ in the body. MRSA that spreads to internal organs can become life-threatening. Symptoms that need immediate medical attention when associated with skin infections include: fever, chills, low blood pressure, joint pain, severe headaches, shortness of breath, and rash over most of the body.



Who is "high risk"?

1. People with obvious breaks in the skin (surgical patients, hospital patients with IV's, burn patients)
2. People with depressed immune systems (infants, elderly, HIV-infected)
3. People with chronic diseases (diabetes, cancer)
4. People with psoriasis or other skin conditions

Where can I get more information?



The Peninsula Health Department (594-7305, email: peninsula@vdh.virginia.gov), Virginia Department of Health (www.vdh.virginia.gov), and Centers for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov) have a wealth of information. ***If you have a safety concern in your work area related to MRSA, contact Kristin Benson in the Office of Self Insurance at 926-1324.***