

3. **A**void sharing personal items (e.g., towels, washcloth, razor, clothing, or uniforms) that may have had contact with the infected wound and potentially infectious material. Wash linens and clothes that become soiled with hot water and laundry detergent. Drying cloths in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying, also helps kill bacteria in clothes.
4. **T**ell any healthcare providers who treat you that you have an antibiotic-resistant staph skin infection.



**Community-Associated MRSA
(CA-MRSA)
Fact Sheet for Patients**

For additional information about CA-MRSA, please visit the Washoe District Health Department website at www.co.washoe.nv.us/health/cchs/cdpp or The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/hip/Aresist/mrsa_comm_faq.htm

**Washoe County
District Health Department**



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What is MRSA?

MRSA is a type of *Staphylococcus aureus* (*S. aureus*). *Staphylococcus aureus*, often referred to simply as "staph", are bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Some *S. aureus* are resistant to the class of antibiotics that are frequently used to treat staph such as methicillin-and thus are called methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* (MRSA)

What infections does MRSA cause?

MRSA infections are usually mild, superficial infections of the skin that can be treated successfully with proper skin care and antibiotics. MRSA, however, can be difficult to treat and can progress to life-threatening blood or bone infections because there are fewer effective antibiotics available for treatment.

How do MRSA infections spread?

Staph including MRSA can be spread among people having close contact with infected people. MRSA is almost always spread by direct physical contact and not through the air. Spread may also occur through indirect contact by touching objects (e.g., towels, sheets, wound dressings, clothes, workout areas, or sports equipment) contaminated by the infected skin or a person with staph bacteria or MRSA. Just as *S. aureus* can

be carried on the skin or in the nose without causing any disease, MRSA can be carried in this way also. This is known as colonization.

Who gets MRSA?

MRSA infections occur commonly among persons in hospitals and healthcare facilities. However, MRSA can cause illness in persons outside of hospitals and healthcare facilities as well. Cases of MRSA infection in the community have been associated with recent antibiotic use, sharing contaminated items, having recurrent skin disease, and living in crowded settings. Clusters of skin infections caused by MRSA have been described among injecting drug-users, incarcerated persons, players of close-contact sports, men who have sex with men, and others. Most of the transmission in these settings appeared to be from people with active MRSA skin infections.

How is MRSA diagnosed?

A sample of the infected wound (either a small biopsy of skin or pus taken with a swab) must be obtained to grow the bacteria in the microbiology laboratory. Once the staph is growing, the organism is tested to determine which antibiotics will be effective for treating the infection. A culture of skin lesions is

especially useful in recurrent or persistent cases of skin infection, in cases of antibiotic failure, and in cases that present with advanced or aggressive infections.

If my doctor or healthcare provider has told me that I have an MRSA skin infection, what can I do to prevent others from getting infected?

You can prevent spreading an MRSA infection to those you live with or others around you by following these steps:

1. **Kee**p infections, particularly those that continue to produce pus or to drain material, covered with clean, dry bandages. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions on proper care of the wound. Pus from infected wounds can contain MRSA and spread the bacteria to others.
2. **Advise** your family and other close contacts to wash their hands frequently with soap and warm water, especially if they change your bandages or touch the infected wound or potentially infectious materials.

