

What can I do to prevent others from getting MRSA?

1. Clean your hands often.

Cleaning your hands will remove germs, including MRSA. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer is the most effective way to clean your hands unless they are visibly dirty. When your hands are visibly dirty you need to use soap and water to remove the dirt. Cleaning your hands is particularly important after touching any skin lesion, handling dressings and after doing wound care.

2. Practice good personal hygiene. Wear clean clothes and bathe regularly with soap and water.

3. Cover your wound, particularly if it is open or draining.

4. Do not share personal items, including: towels, washcloths, razors, soap, creams, lotions, cosmetics, toothbrushes, nail files, combs and brushes.

5. Keep your environment clean and free of clutter.

Sports equipment can be a source of MRSA. Regular household cleaners are effective. Soiled laundry may be washed and dried in the regular cycle of your laundry to kill bacteria.

6. Tell your doctor if you have MRSA.

Will this go away?

MRSA might go away, but often it does not. If it does away, it often reoccurs. No treatment is required unless you develop an infection. Your doctor will decide if treatment is necessary.

Questions?

For more information, contact your family doctor, or ask for the Infection Control Practitioner at your local facility.

Site	Infection Control
Vancouver: VGH, UBC, GF Strong, George Pearson	604-875-4111 Ext. 54002
Richmond Health Services	604-244-5156
Lions Gate Hospital	604-341-3908
Coastal: Squamish, Whistler, Pemberton, Sechelt, Powell River	604-815-9339
VCH Public Health	604-244-5156
Providence Health Care	604-485-3214

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Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

Information for Patients,
Families & Visitors

Why am I receiving this pamphlet?

One of your laboratory tests shows that you are carrying an antibiotic resistant bacteria called Methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA).

This information sheet has been provided to help you and your family understand what MRSA are and how to prevent their spread to others.

What is Staphylococcus aureus?

Staphylococcus aureus is a bacterium that normally lives on human skin and in noses. Humans have lots of bacteria in and on their body that do not cause a problem, this is called colonization.

Staphylococcus aureus can cause infections such as boils and abscesses. These infections occur both in healthy individuals and in people who are already sick.

What is MRSA?

MRSA is the same Staphylococcus aureus bacterium that normally lives on skin and in noses, but many antibiotics no longer work to kill it.

Many people are carriers of MRSA and never develop an infection. If a person develops an MRSA infection, alternative antibiotics must be used for treatment.

What does this mean for me?

If you do not have signs or symptoms of an infection, you do not require treatment but special precautions will be used when you are in hospital to prevent spreading MRSA to others.

If you do have an infection, you will be treated with specific antibiotics, local skin care or a combination of both.

Local skin care may include draining abscesses or boils and should only be done by a health care provider.

It is important that if you are given antibiotics, you take all of the doses prescribed even if the infection is getting better. Only stop taking the antibiotics if your doctor tells you to stop taking it. This is because small amounts of antibiotics that don't completely kill bacteria can help them become stronger and resistant to antibiotics.

What will be different when I am in a health care facility?

When you are admitted to a healthcare facility, be sure to notify them that you have MRSA so they know what antibiotics you may need and to prevent spreading MRSA to others.

- In acute care hospitals you will be placed on Contact Precautions. Healthcare workers will wear a gown and gloves when providing your care.

- All healthcare workers must clean their hands before entering and when leaving your room. Do not hesitate to remind healthcare workers to clean their hands.
- Your visitors and family members should wear a gown and gloves if they help with your care.
- Activities outside your room may be restricted, because MRSA can spread easily in some acute care settings.
- Equipment used in your daily care may remain in your room.
- If you are in a long term care or rehabilitation facility, signs are not used and activities are not restricted. Social activities in these settings are encouraged, being important for resident care. The risk of spreading MRSA is not the same as in an acute care hospital.
- You will be taught how to clean your hands properly with alcohol-based hand sanitizer and with soap and water.
- By cleaning your hands well and often, the risk of spreading MRSA and other germs is very low.
- When in hospital or a long term care facility, it is important to clean your hands before leaving your room or bed space and before entering any communal areas (e.g., lounge, patient kitchen, cafeteria)