

Know the Truth about MRSA Skin Infections

The truth about *methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) may surprise you. MRSA is a type of bacteria that causes skin and other kinds of infections. Sometimes called “the superbug,” MRSA is resistant to certain antibiotics, but several antibiotics still work. And many times, antibiotics aren’t even needed -- doctors are often able to treat MRSA skin infections by simply draining them.

Because skin infections caused by MRSA are increasing, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) launched a new campaign to educate families about MRSA. Although most of these skin infections are mild, some infections may become life-threatening. There are a few simple steps you can take to protect yourself and your family from MRSA skin infections.

Step 1: Know the signs and symptoms of MRSA and get treatment early

A staph skin infection, including one caused by MRSA, usually appears as a bump or infected area on the skin that may be red, swollen, painful, warm to the touch or full of pus or other drainage. It is especially important to contact your health care provider if these signs and symptoms are accompanied by a fever.

Step 2: Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered

Keeping cuts and scrapes covered will help prevent spreading bacteria to others. If you think the area is infected, contact your healthcare provider and follow their instructions about proper care of the infection. Be sure to discard used bandages in the trash.



Step 3: Encourage good hygiene such as cleaning hands regularly

Bacteria and other germs are often spread from person to person by direct contact – mostly by our hands. Clean your hands frequently with soap and

water or an alcohol-based hand rub, especially after changing a bandage or touching infected skin.

Step 4: Discourage sharing of personal items such as towels and razors

Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, washcloths, razors, or clothing that may have had contact with infected skin or soiled bandages. Wash sheets, towels, and clothes with water and laundry detergent. Water temperatures for household laundry depend on the type of fiber or fabric of the clothing. In general, wash and dry in the warmest temperatures recommended on the clothing label. Use a clothes dryer to dry clothes completely.

For more information on the CDC’s campaign, please visit www.cdc.gov/MRSA.