

IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

STAPHYLOCOCCAL - SKIN INFECTIONS

Staphylococcus aureus (Staph) is a type of bacteria that normally lives on the skin. However, if it enters the body through a cut or scrape, it may cause. Some Staph (known as Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA) are resistant to certain antibiotics, making it harder to treat.

Symptoms

- Most staph skin infections, including MRSA, appear as a bump, which may look like a spider bite or a pimple. It may be red, painful, warm to the touch, and full of pus or other drainage.
- There may also be an infected area on the skin that remains flat but is bright red, painful, swollen, and warm to the touch.
- There may be a fever as well. This is a sign that the skin infection is more serious.

Transmission

- Staph infection can be passed from skin-to-skin contact with an infected person.
- Sharing personal items, such as towels or razors, that have touched infected skin or touching contaminated surfaces or items, such as used bandages, can also spread the infection.
- Even if surfaces have MRSA on them, this does not mean that you will definitely get an infection if you touch these surfaces. MRSA is most likely to cause problems when you have a cut or scrape that is not covered. MRSA can also get into small, invisible openings in the skin.
- The first cases of MRSA were among hospital patients that usually had other health conditions. Today, MRSA circulates in the community. Cases have occurred among athletes who share equipment, people in crowded living conditions such as prisons and dormitories, and daycares.

Treatment

- If you think you have a staph infection, cover the area with a bandage and contact your healthcare professional, especially if you have a fever.
- Treatment for MRSA skin infections may include having a healthcare professional drain the infection and, in some cases, prescribe an antibiotic. **Do not attempt to drain the infection yourself** – doing so could worsen or spread it to others.
- Be sure to take all of the doses of antibiotic exactly as your healthcare provider tells you, even if you are getting better. Care for any wounds carefully according to your provider's instructions.

Prevention

- Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water.
- Know the signs of MRSA skin infections and get treated early.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered. Don't touch someone else's wound or bandages.
- Don't share personal items such as towels and razors.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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