



## Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* MRSA infections

### Disease Fact Sheet

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#### **What is MRSA?**

MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. MRSA is a type of *Staphylococcus* (staph) bacterium that has developed resistance to antibiotics such as methicillin, ampicillin and other penicillins that are usually used to treat staph infections.

#### **How do people get MRSA?**

People get MRSA the same way they get methicillin-sensitive strains of *S. aureus*. The primary way people get MRSA is by contact (direct or indirect) with a person who has a wound infection, an infection of the respiratory tract, or who is colonized with MRSA.

#### **Does everyone exposed to MRSA become infected?**

No. Some people who are exposed to MRSA become colonized, which means that MRSA is present but is not causing disease. MRSA colonization occurs on the skin surface, in the nasal passages, in the sputum, or in the urine. Some people exposed to MRSA never become colonized. MRSA colonization may lead to infections in people with weakened immune systems. However, people who get MRSA infections are usually already very ill from other medical conditions.

#### **How are MRSA infections treated?**

Effective antibiotics may include Bactrim, vancomycin and daptomycin. Laboratory tests are usually done to determine which antibiotic will be most effective to treat a MRSA infection. Only patients with symptomatic MRSA infection should be treated; MRSA colonization should usually not be treated.

#### **How long will MRSA last?**

The length of illness caused by a MRSA infection depends upon the severity of the infection, the response to antibiotic therapy, and the person's overall health. After infection has been resolved, the person may remain intermittently or persistently colonized with MRSA and may or may not develop future infections.

#### **What precautions should be followed when I go home?**

Handwashing is the most important measure to prevent transmission of MRSA. Hands should always be washed after using the toilet. Use household hand soap for at least 20 seconds.

If you require continued care at home, you and anyone caring for you should wear gloves when handling body fluids (urine, wound drainage, etc.) or touching surfaces contaminated with body fluids.

Disposable items soiled by body fluids (dressings, diapers, used gloves, etc.) should be placed in the trash. Good cleaning with soap and water followed by a household disinfectant such as bleach is adequate to disinfect surfaces contaminated with MRSA. Laundry can be done in accordance with manufacturer's directions using standard detergent. Dishes and utensils can be washed as usual.