



## CD Update...Communicable Disease Surveillance Information

### MRSA – Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (Staph)

It's important to understand that skin infections are common. Staph aureus is one of the more typical types of infection. 30% of the population carries Staph aureus on the skin or in the nose without ever getting ill. 1% carries MRSA, which is more difficult to treat, but treatment is available.

Three points to keep in mind:

- **Good personal hygiene, particularly frequent hand washing, is the best defense against illness.**
- **Cover wounds to prevent contact with others**
- **If you have a skin infection, see your doctor**

#### What is *Staphylococcus aureus* or Staph?

Staph is a type of bacteria. It may cause skin infections that look like pimples or boils. Skin infections caused by Staph may be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. Some Staph (known as Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA) are resistant to certain antibiotics, making it harder to treat. The information on this page applies to both Staph and MRSA.

#### Who gets Staph infections?

Anyone can get a Staph infection. People are more likely to get a Staph infection if they have:

- Skin-to-skin contact with someone who has a Staph infection
- Contact with items and surfaces that have Staph on them
- Openings in their skin such as cuts or scrapes
- Crowded living conditions
- Poor hygiene

#### How serious are Staph infections?

Most Staph skin infections are minor and may be easily treated. Staph also may cause more serious infections, such as infections of the bloodstream, surgical sites, or pneumonia. Sometimes, a Staph infection that starts as a skin infection may worsen. It is important to contact your doctor if your infection does not get better.

## **How are Staph infections treated?**

Treatment for a Staph skin infection may include taking an antibiotic or having a doctor drain the infection. If you are given an antibiotic, be sure to take all of the doses, even if the infection is getting better, unless your doctor tells you to stop taking it. Do not share antibiotics with other people or save them to use later.

## **How do I keep Staph infections from spreading?**

- Wash your hands often or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Keep your cuts and scrapes clean and cover them with bandages
- Do not touch other people's cuts or bandages
- Do not share personal items like towels or razors

If you have any questions about your condition, please ask your doctor. For more information, please visit:

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar\\_mrsa.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa.html).  
<http://www.idph.state.il.us/public/hb/hbmrsa.htm>.  
[www.cookcountypublichealth.org](http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org)