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# Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) Basics

KEY POINTS

- MRSA is a type of bacteria that is resistant to several antibiotics.
- Although anyone can get MRSA, some groups have a higher risk.
- If left untreated, MRSA infections can cause sepsis or death.

MORE INFORMATION

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## Overview

*Staphylococcus aureus* (staph) is a very common germ. About one out of every three people have the germ on their skin or in their nose. This germ does not cause problems for most people.

MRSA is a type of staph that can be resistant to several antibiotics. Anyone can get a MRSA infection or carry MRSA. The risk increases for people with hospitalizations or nursing home stays, skin-to-skin contact with others (such as in contact sports), and exposure to crowded and unhygienic places.

**Keep Reading:**
Clinical Overview of Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) in Healthcare Settings

## Signs and symptoms

The symptoms of an *S. aureus* infection, including MRSA, depend on the part of the body that is infected. Broken skin, such as scrapes or cuts, is often the site of a MRSA infection. Most *S. aureus* skin infections, including MRSA, appear as a bump or infected area on the skin that might be:

- Red.
- Swollen.
- Painful.
- Warm to the touch.
- Full of pus or other drainage.
- Accompanied by a fever.

You cannot tell by looking at the skin if it's a MRSA infection. People sometimes confuse some MRSA skin infections with a spider bite. However, unless you actually see the spider, the irritation is likely not a spider bite.

**If you or someone in your family experiences the signs and symptoms of MRSA infection:**

Contact your healthcare provider, especially if the symptoms include a fever or do not improve within 48 hours.

Do not pick at or pop the bump or sore.

Cover the area with clean, dry bandages until you can see a healthcare provider.

Clean your hands often.

## Complications

MRSA infections can cause serious problems in and outside of healthcare settings, including:

- Pneumonia (lung infections).
- Bloodstream infections.
- Surgical site infections.
- Sepsis, the body's extreme response to an infection (if left untreated).
- Death (if left untreated).

## Who is at risk

Although anyone can get MRSA, some groups have a higher risk:

- Athletes.
- Daycare and school students.
- Military personnel in barracks.
- People who receive inpatient medical care.
- People who have surgery or medical devices inserted in their body.
- People who inject drugs PDF.

## How it spreads

MRSA spreads in the community through contact with infected people, wounds, or things that have touched infected skin and are carrying the bacteria.

Some people who carry MRSA can go on to get a MRSA infection.

## Prevention

You can reduce your risk of MRSA infections and help prevent their spread.

**Keep Reading:**

Preventing Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

## Diagnosis

A healthcare provider must send a clinical specimen to a laboratory to determine if MRSA is the cause of an infection.

## Treatment and recovery

Healthcare providers often prescribe antibiotics to treat MRSA infections. Some types of *S. aureus* infections need surgery to drain infected areas. Your healthcare provider will determine which treatments are best for you. While MRSA can be resistant to several antibiotics, meaning these drugs cannot cure the infections, there are antibiotics available to treat MRSA infections.

## What CDC is doing

- Tracking MRSA infections through the Emerging Infections Program and National Healthcare Safety Network.
  - Data is also available on the AR & Patient Safety Portal.

- Working closely with health departments, other federal agencies, healthcare providers and patients to prevent infections caused by MRSA and slow the spread of resistant germs.

## Resources

- MRSA Baseline Prevention Practices Assessment Tool for States Establishing HAI Prevention Collaborative PDF
- Laboratory resources
- Reference Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing (AST) Data

SOURCES

**CONTENT SOURCE:**
National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID)