

# MRSA Frequently Asked Questions

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## **What is MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)?**

Some staph bacteria are resistant to antibiotics. MRSA is a type of staph that is resistant to certain antibiotics.

## **Who gets staph or MRSA infections?**

Staph infections, including MRSA, occur most frequently among persons in hospitals and healthcare facilities (such as nursing homes and dialysis centers) who have weakened immune systems. These healthcare-associated staph infections include surgical wound infections, urinary tract infections, bloodstream infections, and pneumonia. MRSA infections that are acquired by persons who **have not** been recently (within the past year) hospitalized or had a medical procedure (such as dialysis, surgery, catheters) are known as CA-MRSA infections. Staph or MRSA infections in the community are usually manifested as skin infections, such as pimples and boils, and occur in otherwise healthy people.

## **How common are staph and MRSA infections?**

Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infection in the United States and are a common cause of pneumonia, surgical wound infections, and bloodstream infections. The majority of MRSA infections occur among patients in hospitals or other healthcare settings; however, it is becoming more common in the community setting. Data from a prospective study in 2003, suggests that 12% of clinical MRSA infections are community-associated, but this varies by geographic region and population.

## **What does a staph or MRSA infection look like?**

Staph bacteria, including MRSA, can cause skin infections that may look like a pimple or boil and can be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. More serious infections may cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or surgical wound infections

## **How can I prevent staph or MRSA skin infections?**

Practice good hygiene:

1. Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
2. Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
3. Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
4. Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.

## **What should I do if I think I have a staph or MRSA infection?**

Keep infections covered with clean, dry bandages, especially infections that produce pus or drain material. **See your healthcare provider!**

## **Are staph and MRSA infections treatable?**

Yes. Most staph and MRSA infections are treatable with antibiotics. If you are given an antibiotic, 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 unfinished antibiotics to use at another time. However, many staph skin infections may be treated by draining the abscess or boil and may not require antibiotics. Drainage of skin boils or abscesses should only be done by a healthcare provider. If after visiting your healthcare provider the infection is not getting better after a few days, contact them again. If other people you know or live with get the same infection tell them to go to their healthcare provider.