

## Having MRSA means what?

# Living healthy with MRSA

Discharge information for  
patients and families



**WASHING YOUR HANDS IS  
THE KEY!!!**

*Staph aureus* is a bacteria that lives on your skin and normally does not cause any problems. *Methicillin* is an antibiotic used to treat infection caused by *Staph aureus*. When this antibiotic is unable to kill these bacteria then we refer to it as MRSA (*Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus*). You can have MRSA anywhere on your body but most frequently it is found in the nose. In order to test for MRSA a gentle swab is rolled inside both nostrils, on the skin lesion, or on the other areas of concern, and is sent to lab for testing. Anyone can develop MRSA but people at greatest risk are the chronically ill, people with weakened immune systems, and people who are in the hospital for a longtime and have taken many antibiotics. People at risk in the community are those that live in close living arrangements with many others, and those in close physical contact such as athletes, prisoners etc.

## How contagious am I?

This germ is spread by direct CONTACT, therefore anything you touch can end up being contaminated. If your doctor says that you are INFECTED that means you have symptoms and you need to be treated. If you are COLONIZED (a CARRIER) that means you have MRSA but no active infection. Either way you can still spread the germ to others. If you have MRSA in your sputum, nose or any other areas on your body, do not let anybody come in contact with those areas. Washing your hands frequently and preventing others from coming in contact with your infections are the best ways to avoid spreading MRSA.



## Personal hygiene DO'S!



- ✓ Wash hands frequently
- ✓ Carry alcohol-based gel with you to sanitize hands
- ✓ Cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing
- ✓ Cough into your elbow if you do not have a tissue
- ✓ Change clothes daily and wash after wearing
- ✓ Change sheets and towels regularly
- ✓ Have a designated towel for yourself
- ✓ Have a designated chair in house to sit in
  - ✓ Use pump soap
- ✓ Use spray deodorant rather than roll-on
- ✓ Use makeup with single pump application
  - ✓ Cover your sores with bandage
- ✓ Place soiled bandages in a plastic bag and close it up before discarding in the trash

## Personal hygiene DONT'S!



- ✓ Do not share towels, razors, deodorant, clothes, toothbrush, makeup, or any other personal items
- ✓ Do not put clothes you wore today back in the closet
- ✓ Do not go to public gym, sauna, tub, or pool until sores are healed
- ✓ Do not get manicures, massages, or hair cuts until sores have healed
- ✓ Avoid being around people with weakened immune systems( newborns, elderly, someone with chronic disease such as diabetes)
- ✓ Do not use products where you re-introduce your fingers like creams in jars

## Proper way to bathe



Bathe with soap called Chlorhexidine (Hibiclens or Betasept are main brands) or pHisohex (need prescription for this). Make sure to apply soap to your entire body (turn the shower off while doing that). It is recommended to use this soap daily for one week and then twice per week. Taking a "Bleach bath" once per day for 1week then once per week is also recommended (pour 2 cups of bleach in a full bath tub and sit in it for 15-20 minutes).

## How do I wash my laundry?



Since bedding and dirty clothes can spread MRSA as well they should be

changed daily and washed. Keep your laundry separate from others. While collecting and carrying your laundry ensure that it is away from your body and clothes. If the clothes are visibly soiled with drainage from body fluids wear gloves while handling. Wash laundry with hot water and bleach if possible. Dry in the hot dryer and ensure that it is completely dry before handling.

## How do I clean my house?



MRSA bacteria can live on surfaces for several days, therefore it is important to clean regularly. Dishes can be washed in the sink or dishwasher as usual. Pay attention to everything you touch frequently

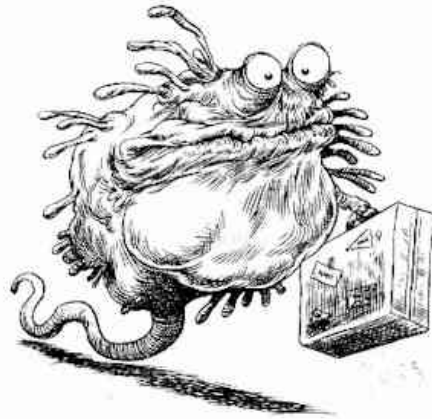
because they need to be cleaned regularly. Some examples are keyboards, faucet, doorknobs, light switches, toilet seat, remote control, phone, kitchen counter etc.

You can clean these surfaces with any cleaner that has a word "disinfectant" on it, or you can make your own bleach solution. Bleach solution should be made fresh every time you plan to use it because it evaporates quickly. Mix one tablespoon of bleach with one quart of water and make your own spray bottle and label it. Use disposable paper towel for cleaning and throw it away after each use. DO NOT use any cloth material for cleaning and saving it for the next time. Antibacterial wipes are another good way to clean surfaces that are used frequently by all family members, so you can wipe those surfaces after each use. Carry the wipes with you so you can wipe the shopping carts or

surfaces you have touched in the public restroom.

## How do I get rid of MRSA?

There are certain antibiotics that can be used to treat an MRSA. There are some people who get treated and never test positive again. Some people may carry this germ and have no symptoms for months or years after being treated. People who are chronically ill and have open wounds or tubes may carry this germ for a long time and might never be able to get rid of it completely.



## Close contact with family

You can still hug and kiss your loved ones. If you follow all the directions listed and wash your hands routinely you minimize the spread of MRSA to your family and the community.



## What happens if I get admitted to the hospital again?

You will be tested for MRSA and you will be routinely placed on CONTACT precautions.



In order to get rid of isolation you need to have at least two negative sets of test results from the nose and all the other sites you tested positive for previously.

Be sure to tell all your healthcare providers if you have a history of MRSA. Hand washing is the best prevention in the spread of MRSA.

*Feel free to ask all the healthcare workers if they have washed their hands before entering your room.*

For more information go to [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

References:

<http://www.tpchd.org/page.php?id=364>

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar\\_mrsa\\_in\\_schools.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_in_schools.html)

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