

Community Associated MRSA (CA-MRSA)

FACT SHEET

What is CA-MRSA?

CA-MRSA (Community-Associated Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus) is a type of bacteria or germ that is not killed by the most common antibiotics (like Penicillin). If these germs cause an infection, then a stronger antibiotic must be used. Most often these bacteria cause skin infections (like pimples and boils); but they can also cause more serious infections (like pneumonia or infections in an incision after an operation).

What is the difference between being colonized and infected?

MRSA is a germ that lives on the skin and in the nose of about 25 per cent of us. This is called colonization, and occurs with other germs all over our bodies. It does not normally cause a problem. MRSA, however, can cause infections such as boils and abscesses. In the hospital, it can cause more serious infections in those patients who are already ill.

How do you get CA-MRSA?

Most MRSA infections happen to people in hospitals or nursing homes who have weak immune systems. MRSA can also cause infections in people who have not been in the hospital or a nursing home, and these infections are called community-associated MRSA (CA-MRSA). You can get this infection from:

- skin-to-skin contact with someone who has this infection.
- touching things (e.g., towels) or surfaces (e.g., benches) that have drainage or pus on them.
- openings in your skin, like cuts or scrapes.
- not washing your hands or not washing them well enough.

What are the symptoms?

Most people with CA-MRSA have skin infections. Symptoms on the skin may include:

- a pimple or boil
- redness or swelling
- pain
- pus or other drainage

More serious infections can cause pneumonia or bloodstream infections.

What is the Treatment?

Many of these infections can be treated by draining the abscess or boil and may not need antibiotics. Drainage should only be done by a health-care provider. Contact your doctor if the infection is not getting better after a few days following drainage. At that point, you may need to be treated with an antibiotic for a period of time. 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 or save your antibiotics. If other people you know or live with get the same kind of infection, tell them to go to their doctor.

How can you prevent CA-MRSA?

- Practice good general hygiene (e.g., take regular baths or showers).
- Keep your hands clean by washing them often with soap and water. If there is no soap or water available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage or dressing until healed.
- Do not touch other people's cuts or bandages.
- Do not share personal items such as towels, razors, creams, lotions, and soaps.
- Clean sports equipment that touches the skin with detergents/disinfectants (e.g., Lysol). It's very important that gym equipment be cleaned before and after each use.
- Make sure that your family and others in close contact with you wash their hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if there's no soap and water available.