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## MRSA FACT SHEET (Methicillin Resistant Staph Aureus)

### **What does antibiotic resistance mean?**



Germs or bacteria may cause infections. Antibiotics are drugs used to treat infections caused by bacteria. Sometimes these drugs will no longer kill the germs. This is called antibiotic drug resistance.

### **What is Staphylococcus aureus?**



Staphylococcus aureus, or Staph aureus for short, is a common bacteria found on the skin of healthy people. If Staph gets into the body it can cause a minor infection such as boils or pimples or serious infections such as pneumonia or blood infections. It may cause infections on broken skin or wounds. Methicillin is a type of antibiotic used to treat infections caused by Staph aureus. If Staph aureus is resistant to Methicillin, it is called Methicillin resistant Staph aureus (MRSA). This means that the infection may be more difficult to treat. If someone has a MRSA infection there are other antibiotics than can be used.

### **What is infection vs. colonization?**



An infection means that the bacteria are in or on the body and make you sick which results in signs and symptoms such as fever, pus from a wound, a high white blood cell count, or pneumonia. Bacteria can also be in the body, but not make you sick. This is called colonization. People who are colonized will have no signs or symptoms. They feel fine. MRSA can cause infection or colonization.

### **What are risk factors for getting MRSA?**



Anyone can get MRSA but you are more at risk if you are over age 65, have a chronic disease like diabetes, cancer, or heart disease, if you have a break in your skin from surgery, sores, scrapes or burns, if you have tubes in your body or if you are in a crowded place like a hospital, nursing home, or daycare. You may be at more risk if you have had frequent, long-term or intensive use of antibiotics. Persons with long-term illnesses, who are immune-suppressed, or that are IV drug users are also at increased risk. The infection can develop in an open wound such as a cut, scrape, bedsore, urinary catheter, or IV. You can get MRSA from touching items that have MRSA on them. You can also get MRSA from direct contact with people who have MRSA. You can pass these germs from your hands to your nose, skin and other people. You can also pass MRSA from your hands by touching common household items. MRSA can infect healthy people so you must protect yourself through good hand washing and hygiene habits and do not share personal items such as razors, toothbrushes, towels, etc. MRSA can live on people, surfaces and items for a while- days to weeks.

### **How do I know if I have MRSA?**



Your doctor may order a test sample from your wound, blood, urine, nose, or sputum to be sent to the lab. This test is called a culture. If there is MRSA in the sample, the culture is positive. This means you have MRSA in your body.

### **What will this mean for my hospital care?**



All patients who have positive cultures for MRSA are placed in isolation. Isolation is used to keep from spreading MRSA to other patients. There will be a cart outside the room to hold supplies. A card will be placed on the door to alert everyone to what precautions are needed to enter your room. Hospital staff will wear gowns and gloves to care for you and will sometimes wear a mask. Visitors should report to the nurses' station for direction on what to do and to enter your room. All of these steps are to keep bacteria from spreading to others. MRSA spreads thru physical contact, not thru the air.

### **Am I contagious?**



Contact with the infected/colonized part of the body is usually what spreads MRSA. You can distribute it to anything you touch if you do not clean your hands. Hands may be washed with soap and water for ten seconds or sanitized with an alcohol-based cleanser that is on the wall in your room. You will need to stay in Isolation until the cultures are negative. Check with your nurse before ambulating in the hall or going to other areas of the hospital. Healthy people, including children are at very low risk of contracting MRSA. Casual contact such as hugging is okay, however hands should be washed before leaving the patient's hospital room or home. Persons should use gloves however, before handling any body fluids of the infected persons, and remove the gloves and wash the hands before leaving.

### **What will happen when I go home?**



At home, in most cases, you only need to use good handwashing. Healthy family members, who do not have large open wounds, skin diseases, or diabetes are not likely to get MRSA. Based on your discharge needs, instructions will be given by the nursing staff.