

A Parent's Guide to MRSA in California: What You Need To Know

What is Staphylococcus aureus?

Staphylococcus aureus (staph) are bacteria that many healthy people carry on their skin or in their nose. About 25 percent to 30 percent of people in the United States carry staph in their nose, but it does not make them sick. Staph can also be carried in the armpit, groin, rectum or genital area. Most staph infections are minor and can be treated without antibiotics. However, staph can sometimes cause serious infections like pneumonia, blood or joint infections, and deep skin infections.

What is MRSA?

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a type of staph that is not killed by penicillin and similar antibiotics. About 1 out of every 100 people carries MRSA without making them sick. In California over half of all the staph bites)

- Red painful bumps under the skin, called boils or abscesses
- A cut that is swollen, hot, and filled with pus
- Blisters filled with fluid or red skin with a honey-colored crust (usually on the face)
- Red, warm, firm skin area that is painful and getting larger (usually on the legs)

How does a person get staph or MRSA?

Staph and MRSA can be spread when a person:

- Has direct skin-to-skin contact with an infected person,
- Touches surfaces that have staph on them from someone else's infection (e.g., towels, athletic equipment, used bandages).

Staph is not usually passed through the air.

How are staph and MRSA infections treated?

Some staph skin infections are treated by draining the sores and may not require antibiotics. Draining these sores should be done by a doctor. If the doctor gives you antibiotics, make sure you take all of the medicine, even if the infection is getting better. Do not share your medicine with anyone else or save it to use at another time. Call your doctor back if the infection does not get better after a few days. If other people you know or live with get the same infection, tell them to go to their doctor.

Is it possible to have another staph or MRSA skin infection aft

- Take good care of the skin; avoid skin damage, and clean damaged skin promptly with soap and water.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed. Pus from infected wounds can contain staph and MRSA.
- Don't share personal items such as towels, clothing, or other items that touch skin. Use a barrier (for example, clothing or a towel) between your skin and shared equipment such as weight-training benches.
- Wash soiled clothes, sheets, and towels with water and laundry detergent, and dry them completely in a hot dryer.

For more information about MRSA and staph infections, contact your doctor, local health department, or the National Nosocomial Infection Society (NNIS).