

## **MRSA Fact Sheet – Gen Brauning-Hawgood MD**

### **What is MRSA?**

MRSA stands for Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus. MRSA is a strain of Staphylococcus Aureus bacteria that is resistant to a certain class of antibiotics including methicillin, amoxicillin, and penicillin. Antibiotic resistance can make MRSA infections difficult to treat.

### **Is there a difference between non-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus and MRSA?**

There is a difference between non-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus and Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA). Non-resistant Staphylococcus aureus or “Staph” are common bacteria that normally live on the skin. About 25-30% of the US population is colonized with non-resistant staph bacteria on the skin or in the nasal passages. Being colonized with Staph bacteria means that the bacteria lives on the skin or in the nasal passages of a healthy person but does not cause an infection. About 1% of the US population is colonized with MRSA.

Non-resistant Staph bacteria as well as MRSA can cause an infection when they enter the skin through a cut or a sore. The infection can be minor (such as a pimple or boil) or more serious (such as pneumonia or a bloodstream infection).

### **What is community-acquired MRSA?**

Initially MRSA infections were only seen in people with weakened immune systems, people who had recently been hospitalized, or people living in long-term care facilities. Over the past several years, MRSA infections have spread to people who are not in the above described high risk populations. Community acquired MRSA (CA-MRSA) infections are infections in people who do not have risk factors predisposing them to exposure to MRSA. There has been a lot of concern and media coverage about community-acquired MRSA (CA-MRSA) due to the recent emergence in children, athletes, and other low risk individuals in the community.

### **What are the symptoms of a staph infection or MRSA infection?**

The most common presentation of a staph or MRSA infection is with a skin infection. Symptoms include a red, swollen, and painful area on the skin like a pimple, boil, or abscess. The infected area may have drain pus or feel warm to the touch. Some people describe staph or MRSA skin infections as appearing like a spider bite.

### **Is there any treatment for MRSA infections?**

MRSA skin infections can be treated without hospitalization either by draining the abscess at your doctor’s office and/or taking antibiotics for the infection. More serious infections often require hospitalization and are difficult to treat because there are limited antibiotics available that will treat the more serious infections.

**What should I do if I have the symptoms or a staph or MRSA infection?**

If you have symptoms of a staph or MRSA infection please schedule an appointment with your healthcare provider for further evaluation as soon as possible to prevent progression to a more serious infection.

**How can I prevent getting a MRSA infection?**

Good personal hygiene is the best way to prevent getting a MRSA infection. Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Do not share personal items such as towels or razors. Cover all open wounds or sores with a clean bandage and do not touch other people's cuts or bandages. If you share sports equipment, always clean it first with an antiseptic solution.

**For further information about MRSA from the CDC click on the following link:**

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar\\_mrsa\\_ca\\_public.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_ca_public.html)

**References:**

MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia: MRSA infection

www.cdc.gov