

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 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

References:

MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia: MRSA infection

www.cdc.gov