

# Facts about Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

## Staphylococcus aureus (Staph) is a common germ that is found on the skin and in the noses of many healthy people.

About 30% of people will have the germ in their noses at any given time. Most often it does not cause a problem. When it does cause an infection, it is usually minor and can be treated without an antibiotic. Staph infections usually affect the skin and can cause pimples, boils and infections in cuts. Rarely, it may lead to a more serious infection of the blood or lungs.

Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a Staph germ that has become resistant to many antibiotics, including Methicillin, a type of penicillin. This means that Methicillin and some other antibiotics do not get rid of MRSA infections. However, there are other groups of antibiotics that do work against MRSA. MRSA is increasingly common in most communities.

Community Associated MRSA (CA-MRSA) is a specific type of MRSA that used to be seen mostly in the community, but is now found in both hospitals and in communities. It most often starts as a skin infection (pimples, bumps that look like spider bites or boils) that will not get better.

### A child with a Staph or MRSA infection may have the following signs:

- red, painful bumps under the skin (boils or abscesses)
- blisters filled with fluid or red skin with a honey-coloured crust
- a cut that is swollen, hot and filled with pus
- a wound that looks and feels like a spider bite, but isn't
- red, warm firm skin area that is painful and getting bigger
- fever and chills

## How are Staph and MRSA Spread?

Staph and MRSA are spread by skin-to-skin contact with someone who has Staph or MRSA or by contact with a surface that has Staph or MRSA on it.

Regular hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of Staph or MRSA. Wash hands with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Practice good hygiene, bathe regularly and cover your cough. Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered until healed and take good care of the skin.



## What to Do at Home

- If you think your child may have a Staph infection or an MRSA infection, call your doctor. Your doctor will decide what treatment is needed. Sometimes the doctor will treat Staph infections by draining the sores. Most MRSA infections do not require antibiotics. Your doctor may take a swab of the infection and send it to a laboratory for diagnosis.
- If your doctor prescribes an antibiotic, make sure your child takes it exactly as directed and takes all of the antibiotic, even if the infection is getting better.
- If the infection is not getting better after a few days, call your doctor.
- When taking care of a child with a Staph or MRSA infection, wash your hands often and always before preparing or eating food.
- Don't share personal items such as towels, hairbrushes or sports equipment.



**A child with a Staph or MRSA infection may go to the child care centre or school, as long as the infection is not draining or is covered by a dry dressing. They should avoid physical activity or sports that involve skin-to-skin contact until the infection is healed. You do not need to tell anyone that your child has MRSA; this is personal information.**