

## WHAT IS *STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS*?

*Staphylococcus aureus* is a type of bacteria that lives in the nose and on the skin of about one out of every five people.

## WHAT DOES METHICILLIN-RESISTANCE MEAN?

Some staph bacteria are resistant to antibiotics. Methicillin resistance means that the antibiotic methicillin and other related antibiotics do not kill these bacteria. These are called “MRSA” for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. They may also be called “ORSA” for oxacillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.

## WHAT DOES COMMUNITY-ASSOCIATED MEAN?

Community-associated (CA) infections are infections acquired by people who have not been recently hospitalized or had a medical procedure. MRSA infections in the community usually appear as skin infections and can occur in otherwise healthy people.

## WHAT KINDS OF PROBLEMS CAN MRSA CAUSE?

MRSA can cause infections such as skin infections, pneumonia, or infections of the blood. Skin infections are the most common type of infection with this bacteria. The infected area usually begins with a small bump that resembles a pimple or insect bite, which becomes red and full of pus.

## HOW IS IT SPREAD?

You can pick up MRSA from contact with people who already have it. You can carry it in your nose and on your skin for weeks to months.

MRSA is spread through direct physical contact with an infected individual or by touching objects (e.g. bandages, towels, sheets, clothing) that may be contaminated with the bacteria.

Outbreaks of MRSA have occurred in daycare centers, schools, prisons and sports teams where people have close contact and share equipment and personal items.

## ARE MRSA INFECTIONS TREATABLE?

Yes. Most MRSA infections are treatable with antibiotics. Make sure you take all of the antibiotic doses, even if the infection is getting better, unless your doctor tells you to stop taking it.

MRSA skin infections may also be treated by draining the abscess or boil. Drainage of skin boils or abscesses should only be done by a healthcare provider.

If your infection is not getting better after a few days, contact your doctor again. If other people you know or live with get the same infection tell them to go to their doctor.

## IS IT POSSIBLE THAT MY MRSA SKIN INFECTION WILL COME BACK AFTER IT HAS HEALED?

Yes. It is possible to have a MRSA skin infection come back after it has healed. To prevent this from happening, follow your healthcare provider’s directions while you have the infection, and follow the prevention steps (listed on the next pages) after the infection is gone.

## WHAT GUIDELINES SHOULD I FOLLOW TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF MRSA TO OTHER SITES ON MY BODY OR TO OTHER PEOPLE?

### Caring for the Infected Site:

- Keep draining wounds clean and covered.
- Wash any cut or break in the skin with soap and water and apply a clean bandage daily.
- Dispose of bandages with regular household waste.
- Report new skin sores or boils to your doctor immediately.

### General Personal Hygiene:

- Wash your hands and forearms before and after touching the wound and frequently throughout the day. Use soap and warm water for 15 seconds and dry your hands on a clean towel or paper towel.
- Bathe regularly and do not share bath towels or washcloths.
- Avoid sharing personal items (e.g. razors, clothing).
- Wear clean clothing.
- Avoid sharing drinks and utensils before they are cleaned.

### For Parents with CA-MRSA:

- Before having direct contact with babies or children, wash your hands and forearms thoroughly. Use soap and warm water for 15 seconds and dry your hands on a clean towel or paper towel.
- Do not allow children to play or lie on your bed.

**ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS  
FROM THE ORANGE COUNTY HEALTH  
DEPARTMENT ON PREVENTING THE  
SPREAD OF MRSA IN:**

**Your Home**

- Keep your bedroom and bathroom clean.
- Clean surfaces using cleaners such as Lysol® or Mr. Clean® or household bleach solution (1:100 bleach-to-water solution OR 1 tbsp. bleach to 1 quart water, mixed fresh daily).
- Use hot water and drying for washing laundry and dishwashing because hot water and drying remove the bacteria and prevent spread.

**Schools/Daycares**

- Keep abrasions or cuts covered with a clean dry bandage. Change bandage at least daily.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water and dry hands on individual towels or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Avoid touching contaminated bandages or clothing.

**Sports Teams/Health Clubs**

- Immediately after each game, meet or practice, shower with soap and water.
- Keep abrasions or cuts covered with a clean dry bandage. Change bandage at least daily.
- Avoid sharing personal items, such as towels, razors, soap, or deodorant.
- Use a barrier (e.g. clothing or a towel) between your skin and shared equipment.
- Wipe down surfaces of equipment or gear before and after use with alcohol or an approved antibacterial solution (e.g. Lysol® or Mr. Clean® or household bleach solution).
- Report suspicious lesions to the school nurse/coach/manager immediately.
- Athletes with draining lesions should not participate in contact sports unless the abrasion or cut can be covered completely with a clean, dry bandage.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO:**

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/gcdc.html](http://www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/gcdc.html)

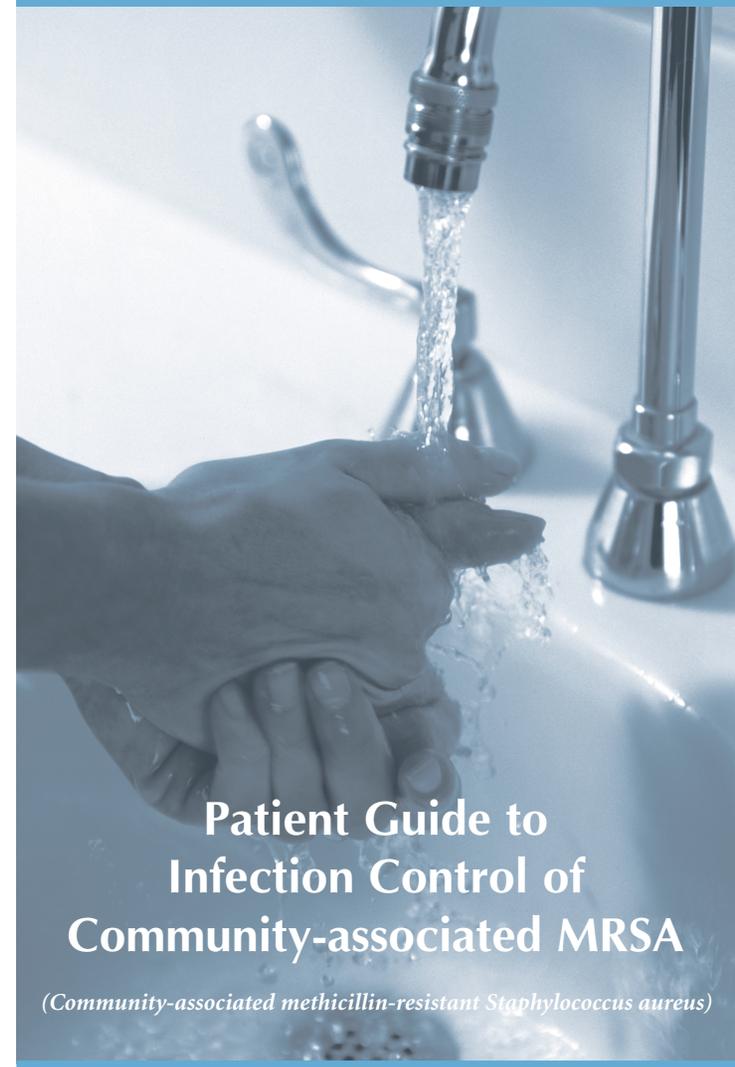
North Carolina State Public Health Department

[www.co.orange.nc.us](http://www.co.orange.nc.us)

Orange County Health Department



*Produced in association with the  
Orange County Health Department*



**Patient Guide to  
Infection Control of  
Community-associated MRSA**

*(Community-associated methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus)*

*Produced in association with the Orange County Health Department*

