

# Community-Associated Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (CA-MRSA)

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## What is Staphylococcus aureus?

Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to as "staph" are bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Approximately 25% to 30% of the population is colonized (when bacteria is present, but not causing an infection) in the nose with staph bacteria. Sometimes, staph can cause an infection. Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections. Most of these skin infections are minor (such as pimples and boils) and can be treated without antibiotics. However, staph bacteria can also cause serious infections (such as surgical wound infections, bloodstream infections, and pneumonia).

## What is MRSA (methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus)?

Some staph bacteria are resistant to antibiotics. MRSA is a type of staph that is resistant to antibiotics called beta-lactams. Beta-lactam antibiotics include methicillin and other more common antibiotics such as oxacillin, penicillin and amoxicillin. While 25% to 30% of the population is colonized with staph, approximately 1% is colonized with MRSA.

Staph infections, including MRSA, occur most frequently among persons in hospitals and healthcare facilities (such as nursing homes and hospitals) who have weakened immune systems. These healthcare-associated staph infections include surgical wound infections, urinary tract infections, bloodstream infection, and pneumonia.

## What is community associated MRSA?

Staph and MRSA can also cause illness in persons outside of hospitals and healthcare facilities. MRSA infections that are acquired by persons who have not been recently (within the past year) hospitalized or had a medical procedure (such as dialysis, surgery, catheters) are known as CA-MRSA infections. Staph or MRSA infections in the community are usually manifested as skin infections, such as pimples, boils, and occur in otherwise healthy people.

## How can I prevent staph or MRSA skin infections?

Practice good hygiene:

- Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.
- Consult a healthcare provider if you feel you have an infected cut, scrape or skin abrasion.

## You can prevent spreading staph or MRSA skin infections to others by following these steps:

- Cover your wound. Keep wounds that are draining or have pus covered with clean, dry bandages. Follow your healthcare provider's

instructions on proper care of the wound. Pus from infected wounds can contain staph and MRSA, therefore keeping it covered will help prevent the spread to others. Bandages and tape can be discarded in the regular garbage.

- Clean your hands. People in close contact should wash their hands often with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after changing or touching an infected wound.
- Do not share personal items. Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, uniforms or sports equipment that may have had contact with the infected wound or bandage. Wash sheets, towels, and clothes that become soiled with water and laundry detergent. Drying clothes in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying, also helps kill bacteria in clothes.
- Talk to your doctor. Tell any healthcare providers who treat you that you have or had a staph or MRSA skin infection.

*Adapted from the Center for Disease Control [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and the Grey Bruce Health Unit*

**For more information,  
contact your local  
health inspector  
or call 1-800-461-1818.**

