

Protecting ourselves from Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

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We are constantly coming into contact with people in our personal world through school, work, church, sports, and traveling around the world. It's part of our daily life to interact with others. Engaging in conversation and sharing a comforting hug with a friend or neighbor is important in keeping us healthy and happy.

Being cautious of when others are not feeling well is also important. We all carry various sorts of germs inside our body or on our skin, and usually our bodies control the germs causing us no harm. But, one out of three of us have a germ on our skin called "staph." Again, typically it causes us no problems, but should we get a scrape or cut, we can find ourselves hosting an infection that is dangerous to us and those in our community.

A staph infection can be mild affecting only the skin. But, it can also go deeper, and this is when we find ourselves and those around us in danger. These types of infections generally happen to younger children, elderly adults and people with compromised immune systems.

Methicillin, a type of penicillin, is used to treat the infection. But, MRSA has become an especially dangerous type of infection learning to outsmart Methicillin, leaving it ineffective.

So, how do we catch MRSA? Touching a person who has MRSA on his or her skin; being in close contact with someone who coughs, sneezes, or even breathes near you who is infected. By touching a surface such as a door knob, a table at a restaurant or a check out counter in a store, one can become infected. If your skin has an open wound from an abrasion or cut, you are subject to picking up MRSA from any of the above.

Do you think you might have MRSA? While we shouldn't become panicked and start donning a hazmat suit, we should always be cognizant of where we are and who is around us. If you have contacted a MRSA infection, you will most likely show skin problems. A red, tender lump that might ooze pus should be inspected by a medical provider. You might also develop a cluster of pimple like looking bumps similar to insect bites. If you have an infection and it progresses into your blood system, you can become very ill developing a fever and feeling listless.

See your provider if you are concerned. He or she may take blood tests, x-rays or a swab from your skin to check for infection and to determine if additional testing is necessary.

Is MRSA treatable? Yes. Special antibiotics are available to treat your infection. It is very important that you take all medication given to you by your caregiver, even if you

begin to feel better. Do not save them in case you become sick later. Not finishing all of your antibiotic, subjects you to a return case of MRSA that can be even stronger. If your infection is too strong for outpatient antibiotics, you may require hospital admission to receive stronger medicines.

Is MRSA preventable? Hand washing often with soap and water is one of the best preventatives for many illnesses including MRSA. If you are not in a location where hand washing is possible, an alcohol-based hand gel is encouraged. For more information about MRSA or to be evaluated, contact your provider today. If you do not have a medical provider, please call 740-385-0202 to schedule an appointment.