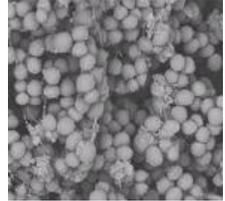


MRSA: Prevention in the Workplace

Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to simply as "staph," is a type of bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people.

Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections in the US. Most of these skin infections are minor (such as pustules and boils) and can be treated without antibiotics. However, staph bacteria also can cause serious infections (such as surgical wound infections, bloodstream infections, and pneumonia).

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) refers to types of staph that are resistant to a type of antibiotic methicillin. MRSA is often resistant to other antibiotics as well. Roughly 25% to 30% of the population is colonized with staph (meaning that bacteria are present, but not causing an infection).



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

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 community-associated MRSA infections. Staph or MRSA infections in the community are usually manifested as skin infections that look like pimples or boils and occur in otherwise healthy people.

Basics:

Can I get MRSA from someone at work? MRSA is transmitted most frequently by direct skin-to-skin contact or contact with shared items or surfaces that have come into contact with someone else's infection (e.g., towels, used bandages). MRSA skin infections can occur anywhere.

Five Cs: Some settings have factors that make it easier for MRSA to be transmitted (gyms, schools, dormitories, military barracks, households, correctional facilities, and daycare centers).

- **Crowding**
- **Contact (frequent skin-to-skin)**
- **Compromised skin (i.e., cuts or abrasions),**
- **Contaminated items and surfaces,**
- **Cleanliness (lack of it)**

What are the Signs & Symptoms of MRSA? MRSA can cause skin infections that may look like a pimple or boil. They can be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. More serious infections may cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or surgical wound infections.

If I have MRSA, can I go to work? Unless directed by a healthcare provider, workers with MRSA infections should be able work. Exclusion from work should be reserved for those with wound drainage ("pus") that cannot be covered and contained with a clean, dry bandage and for those who cannot maintain good personal hygiene.

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If I Have MRSA How Can I Stop The Spread? Cover wounds. Keep areas of the skin affected by MRSA covered. Keep wounds that are draining or have pus covered with clean, dry bandages. Follow healthcare provider's instructions on wound care. Bandages or tape can be discarded with the regular trash. Wash hands frequently with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after changing the bandage or touching the infected wound. Do not share personal items. Avoid sharing personal items such as uniforms, personal protective equipment, clothing, towels, washcloths or razors that may have had contact with the infected wound or bandage.

What Should I Do If I Suspect That My Uniform, Clothing, Personal Protective Equipment Or Workstation Has Become Contaminated With MRSA? Wash uniforms, clothing, sheets and towels that become soiled with water and laundry detergent. Drying clothes in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying, also helps kill bacteria in clothes.

Cleaning contaminated equipment and surfaces with detergent-based cleaners or disinfectants is effective at removing MRSA from the environment. Because cleaners and disinfectants can be irritating to the skin, it is important to read the instruction labels on all cleaners to make sure they are used safely and appropriately.

What Can My Employer Do Prevent The Spread Of Staph Or MRSA At The Workplace?

- Encourage Workers To Practice Good Hygiene
- Ensure The Availability Of Adequate Facilities And Supplies
- Ensure That Routine Housekeeping In The Workplace Is Followed
- Ensure That Contaminated Equipment And Surfaces Are Cleaned With Detergent-Based Cleaners Or Disinfectants

Prevention Through Good Hygiene: Wash YOUR HANDS

Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Wash Hands Thoroughly (Recommended Technique):

Wet Hands With Running Water

Apply Handwashing Agent Over The Entire Surface Of Hands

Vigorously Rub Hand Surfaces For At Least Ten To Fifteen Seconds

Rinse Hands Thoroughly With Hot Water

Dry Hands Completely

Additional Information:

Call Shawn Holle, Safety Analyst, SF Department of Public Health (415) 554-2736