

# What You Need to Know About **Staph/MRSA** Skin Infections



Recently, doctors in Texas have been seeing an increasing number of patients with skin infections caused by *Staphylococcus aureus* ("Staph") bacteria that are resistant to many antibiotics (drugs that kill bacteria), also called methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*—"MRSA."

The Texas Department of State Health Services is working with doctors and other healthcare providers to better understand why this is happening and how to prevent antibiotic (drug) resistant Staph/MRSA skin infections from spreading.

## What is a Staph/MRSA skin infection?

It can be a pimple, rash, boil, or an open wound.

Staph/MRSA is often misdiagnosed as spider bites. Staph bacteria are commonly found on the skin of healthy persons. Staph/MRSA infections often begin with an injury to the skin. Symptoms of a Staph infection include redness, warmth, swelling, tenderness of the skin, and boils or blisters. Sometimes it does not cause any problems; sometimes it causes minor infections, such as pimples or boils. If left untreated, it can cause serious skin infections or worse.



## How do Staph skin infections spread?

Staph/MRSA lives on skin and survives on objects for 24 hours or more.



The cleanest person can get a Staph/MRSA infection. Antibiotic-resistant Staph/MRSA skin infections are found in places where there are crowds of people (schools, jails, gyms).

Staph/MRSA can rub off the skin of an infected person onto the skin of another person during skin to skin contact. Or, the Staph can come off of the infected skin of a person onto a shared object or surface, and get onto the skin of the next person who uses it. Examples of commonly shared objects include towels, soap, benches in hot tubs, and athletic equipment—in other words, anything that could have touched the skin of a Staph infected person can carry the bacteria to the skin of another person.



## How can I prevent myself or my family members from getting infected?

Wash your hands with soap and warm water.

Keep cuts and scrapes clean with soap and water. Avoid skin contact and sharing personal items with anyone you suspect could have a Staph skin infection. When using protective gloves to treat infected area, remove and dispose of properly; wash your hands with soap and water after removing them. Do not share personal items with other persons who might have skin infections.



## What should I do if I think I have a skin infection?

Consult your doctor or healthcare provider.

If you think that you have a skin infection, consult your doctor or healthcare provider as soon as possible. Early treatment can help prevent the infection from getting worse. Be sure to follow directions from your doctor or healthcare provider closely, even when you start to feel better. Not taking all of your pills leads to stronger, antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

## If my doctor or healthcare provider has told me that I have a Staph/MRSA skin infection, what can I do to keep others from getting infected?

Clean your bandages, your hands, and your home.



Keep the infected area covered with clean, dry bandages. Pus from infected wound is *very* infectious.

Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water, especially after changing your bandages or touching the infected skin.



Regularly clean your bathroom, kitchen, and all other rooms, as well as your personal items. Wash clothes and other items that become soiled with hot water or bleach, when possible.



Drying clothes in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying, also helps kill bacteria in clothes.

Tell any healthcare providers who treat you that you have an *antibiotic-resistant* Staph/MRSA skin infection.

\*Modified LAC – DHS (CA) Flyer



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