

FACT SHEET



STAPH

1) WHAT IS STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS?

Staphylococcus bacteria, also commonly called Staph (pronounced staff), are bacteria that live harmlessly on many skin surfaces, especially around the nose, mouth, genitals, and rectum. When the skin is broken for any reason, Staphylococcus bacteria can enter the wound and cause infection. Staphylococcus bacteria can cause minor skin or soft tissue infection such as boils, as well as more serious infections such as wound infections, abscesses, pneumonia, and sepsis.

About 20-30% of healthy people carry Staphylococcus bacteria in their noses at various times, without getting sick. Fingers can carry Staphylococcus bacteria from one area of the body to another to cause infections in wounds or broken skin.

2) WHAT IS MRSA?

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) are Staphylococcus bacteria that have become resistant to certain antibiotics such as penicillin, ampicillin, amoxicillin, augmentin, methicillin, oxacillin, dicloxacillin, cephalosporins, carbapenems, and monobactams. Because of their resistance to some antibiotics, MRSA may be more difficult to treat and possibly lead to more serious infections like pneumonia and bloodstream infections.

3) HOW ARE STAPH INFECTIONS SPREAD?

Staph are spread by direct skin-to-skin contact, such as shaking hands, wrestling or other direct contact with the skin of another person. Staph

are also spread by contact with the skin of another person. Staph are also spread by contact with items that have been touched by people with staph, like towels shared after bathing and drying off or shared athletic equipment in the gym or on the field.

4) HOW IS A STAPH INFECTION TREATED?

A Staph infection can be diagnosed by a doctor. Taking any antibiotics before seeing a doctor should be avoided. If a Staph infection is detected, an antibiotic is usually prescribed by the doctor. If the infection is determined to be MRSA, the doctor may prescribe a different antibiotic or treatment. You should be sure to follow the full course of treatment as prescribed by the doctor. It is very important that you follow all of the doctor's treatment instructions!

5) HOW CAN I PREVENT A STAPH INFECTION?

Regular hand washing is the best way to prevent Staph (and other) infections from passing person-to-person.

1. Wash hands with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds
2. Keep cuts and scrapes clean and cover them with bandages
3. Do not share personal items like towels or razors
4. Do not touch other people's cuts or bandages
5. Thoroughly clean shared sports and workout equipment after every use

6) WHO SHOULD I CALL IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

D.C. Department of Health Call Center at (202) 442-9371.

