

# Just the Facts...

## Community-Acquired Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (CA-MRSA)

### What is *Staphylococcus aureus*?

- ***Staphylococcus aureus* (or staph)** is a bacteria found on the skin or in the nose of healthy people
- About 25% to 30% of the population have staph bacteria in their nose, which can lead to 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
- Staph can also cause serious infections (such as wound infections, bloodstream infections, and pneumonia) that require treatment



### What is CA-MRSA?

- Some staph infections cannot be cured with the usual antibiotics, making them difficult to treat
- These antibiotics include methicillin and other more common antibiotics such as, penicillin, amoxicillin, and oxacillin
- Staph that are resistant or can not be treated by these antibiotics are referred to as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA
- MRSA that is acquired in a community setting rather than a healthcare setting like a hospital is referred to as community-acquired MRSA or CA-MRSA
- About 1% of the population have been shown to have MRSA bacteria

### Who gets staph infections?

- Staph infections (including MRSA) occur most frequently in hospitals and other healthcare facilities among patients who have weakened immune systems.
- CA-MRSA infections occur in otherwise healthy people who have not been hospitalized within the past year or had a medical procedure (such as dialysis, surgery or catheters)

### Are some people at increased risk for CA-MRSA infections?

- CA-MRSA has been seen most often in groups of people who are in close contact with one another such as prison inmates, athletes, military recruits, and children at daycare centers.
- People are more likely to get a staph infection if they have:
  - Close skin-to-skin contact with someone who has a staph infection
  - Contact with items and surfaces that have staph on them
  - Openings in their skin such as cuts and scrapes
  - Crowded living conditions
  - Poor hygiene

## **What does a MRSA infection look like?**

- It is often mistaken for a spider bite
- Staph skin infections can resemble a pimple or boil
- Symptoms may include redness, warmth, swelling, pus, and skin tenderness
- MRSA infections can change from skin irritations to abscesses or serious skin infections
- If left untreated MRSA can infect blood and bones



## **How do I know if I have MRSA?**

- Always seek medical attention if you develop a boil, red or inflamed skin, or have a sore that does not go away
- If the healthcare professional suspects the infection is due to staph he or she may sample the wound to determine the cause and to see which antibiotics are effective for treating the infection

## **What is the treatment?**

- Most MRSA infections are treatable with other antibiotics
- Some MRSA infections can be treated by draining the wound and may not require antibiotics
- **Only health care providers should drain sores**
- Always keep draining sores covered to prevent others from getting infected

## **How can I prevent MRSA infections?**

- MRSA infections can be prevented by following good personal hygiene practices:
  - Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly and frequently with soap and water or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
  - Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until they are healed
  - Avoid touching other people's wounds or bandages
  - Do not share personal items such as razors, towels, uniforms, and other items that may have had contact with the infected wound or bandage
  - Wash dirty clothes, linens, and towels that have become soiled in hot water and laundry detergent
  - Clean off recreational equipment, such as weight benches before use or use a clean barrier such as a towel or shirt between your bare skin and the exercise equipment
  - Shower after work-outs and other physical activities that may expose bare skin to contaminated surfaces or wounds from another person



## **Additional information:**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar\\_mrsa\\_ca.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_ca.html)

CDC's National Center for Infectious Diseases  
[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub\\_mrsa.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub_mrsa.htm)