

# Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)

## Bridgeport Hospital Patient Education

### Infection Control

#### Definitions:

**Methicillin**—one kind of antibiotic

**Staphylococcus Aureus**—one kind of bacterium commonly called staph.

**Resistant**—strong, hardy

**Methicillin**—Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) is a bacterium that cannot be destroyed by the methicillin antibiotic.

#### Explanation:

**Staphylococcus Aureus** is a bacterium that can cause a skin infection. The infection usually looks like small pimples or a red rash. The pimples may be red, swollen, painful or have pus. Staphylococcus Aureus can also cause more serious infections of the bloodstream or surgical sites, or pneumonia.

**Methicillin** is an antibiotic used to clear up an infection. Sometimes methicillin can't destroy the staphylococcus aureus, because the staphylococcus aureus (bacteria) gets too used to (resistant) the methicillin (antibiotic). When this happens, the bacteria are called **Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)**.

#### Who gets MRSA and how is it spread?

Anyone can get a MRSA infection. However, you may have a higher risk of getting an MRSA infection if you have:

- A weakened immune system
- Skin-to-skin contact with someone who has an MRSA infection
- Contact with items and surfaces that with MRSA bacteria on it
- Cuts and scrapes
- Crowded living conditions
- Poor hygiene



## **Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) *(continued)***

MRSA is spread by touching someone who is infected. Touching surfaces that has the bacteria on it can also spread MRSA.

### **How is MRSA treated?**

Treatment for an MRSA infection may include taking an antibiotic or having a doctor drain the infection. If you are given an antibiotic, you must take all of the doses even if the infection is getting better, unless your doctor tells you to stop taking it. Do not share antibiotics with other people or save them for later.

### **How can I avoid getting MRSA?**

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to stop the spread of MRSA. Also:

- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with bandages.
- Take a daily bath or shower.
- Do not touch other people's cuts and bandages.
- Do not share personal items such as towels, washcloths, razors or clothing.
- Wipe down common surfaces such as faucets, door knobs, railings and telephones before and after touching them.

### **What happens in the hospital?**

Special care must be taken so MRSA does not spread to other patients. Patients with MRSA may be placed in private (single) rooms. Everyone must wash their hands with soap and water when entering and leaving the room.

### **Is it safe to visit a person with MRSA?**

It is safe for healthy people who are over the age of 12 to visit a person with MRSA, but visitors should not touch any of the patient's wounds or soiled bandages. All visitors should wash their hands with soap and water each time they enter or leave a patient room.

For more information, or if you have any questions, please call or speak with your doctor or nurse directly.

