

Date: Aug. 14, 2007

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## Community-associated MRSA

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Methicillin-resistant staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) is a type of infection that is resistant to some antibiotics. These antibiotics include methicillin and other more common antibiotics such as oxacillin, penicillin and amoxicillin.

MRSA occurs most frequently among persons in hospitals and healthcare facilities who have weakened immune systems. However, persons who acquire MRSA infections that have not been hospitalized nor had a medical procedure within the past year, are known as community-associated MRSA (CA-MRSA).

CA-MRSA infections are usually manifested as skin infections, such as a pimple or boil, and can be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage, and occur in otherwise healthy people. More serious infections may cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections or surgical wound infections.

“Whenever you suspect a skin infection, you should see your family physician because some infections can be quite serious,” said Edward T. Bope, a family physician at Riverside Family Practice in Columbus, Ohio.

Factors that have been associated with the spread of MRSA skin infections include close skin-to-skin contact, openings in the skin such as cuts or abrasions, contaminated items and surfaces, crowded living conditions, and poor hygiene.

“MRSA in its early stages can be treated with oral antibiotics,” said Bope. “More severe infections will require hospitalization and intravenous antibiotics.”

If you are given an antibiotic, take all of the doses, even if the infection is getting better, unless your family physician tells you to stop taking it. If a few days after visiting your family physician the infection is not getting better, contact your family physician again. If other people you know or live with get the same infection tell them to go to their family physician.

“MRSA infections can recur if not treated for long enough or if re-exposure occurs,” said Bope. “The most susceptible are individuals with chronic illness or advanced age that impairs their immune system.”

You can prevent MRSA infections by practicing good hygiene. This includes keeping hands clean by washing them with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer; keeping cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed; avoiding contact with other people’s wounds or bandages; avoiding sharing personal items such as towels or razors; and wiping surfaces of gym equipment.

*The Ohio Academy of Family Physicians is a statewide professional association with more than 4,400 members, including practicing physicians, family medicine residents and medical students. The scope of family medicine encompasses all ages, both sexes and every disease entity. Family physicians provide comprehensive, continuing care to all members of the family.*

## FACT SHEET

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**Symptoms of a MRSA infection can include:**

- A skin infection like a boil or pimple
- A surgical wound infection that looks red and swollen, is painful, and pus filled

**If you are being treated for an infection, call your family physician if:**

- The infection is not better after three or four days
- The infection keeps getting worse
- You develop a fever or your fever gets worse

**Tips on preventing a MRSA skin infection:**

- Keep your hands clean by thoroughly washing with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels and razors
- At health clubs, wipe surfaces of gym equipment before and after use

Sources: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)  
[www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)