



## MIDDLESEX COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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# FACT SHEET

## What you should know about MRSA

### What is MRSA?

- MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus which is a type of “Staph” bacteria.
- Staph bacteria are one of the most frequent causes of skin infections in the United States.

### Is MRSA New?

- No, MRSA is not new.
- Since the 1960’s, there have been reports on cases of MRSA.

### Who can get MRSA?

- Anyone can get a Staph infection.
- Staph bacteria can be found in a person’s nose or on their skin without causing an infection in that person.

### How is MRSA Spread?

- Staph bacteria, including MRSA, are almost always spread by direct physical contact.
- The bacteria can spread when people come into contact with objects that have been contaminated with the bacteria. These objects include: soiled towels, clothing, bedding, gym or sports equipment and bandages; bars of soap; contaminated surfaces, etc.
- MRSA infections are increasing among certain groups of people such as: hospital patients, prisoners, nursing home residents, children attending day care, athletes, military recruits and people with weak immune systems.
- Staph bacteria are not spread through the air.

### Should infected students/employees be excluded from school/work?

- People who are infected with Staph infections are permitted to attend school/work as long as they comply with infection control measures.
- Skin infections should be kept clean and bandaged.
- Students who participate in contact sports may be excluded from participating if they can not keep their wound properly bandaged.

### **What are the symptoms of MRSA?**

- MRSA skin infections are generally minor, such as pimples, boils and other skin conditions.
- They are often mistaken for spider bites.
- Left untreated, these infections can get worse.
- These infections could spread to the bloodstream or lungs, causing serious illness and possibly death.
- If you suspect a MRSA skin infection, you should seek medical attention.

### **Can MRSA be treated?**

- Yes, MRSA can be treated.
- MRSA is resistant to some antibiotics which makes it more difficult to treat, but there are other antibiotics that are able to treat the infection.
- When you are prescribed antibiotics by a healthcare provider it is important to finish taking the full course of treatment.
- Don't share antibiotics with other people or save unfinished antibiotics for use at another time.

### **What can I do to prevent MRSA infections?**

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
- Don't share personal items such as towels or razors.
- Maintain good personal hygiene.
- Clean your environment with disinfectants approved by the Environmental Protection Agency.
- Consult your healthcare provider for evaluation of any suspicious skin lesions.

### **Where can I get more information about MRSA?**

- Your healthcare provider.
- Your local health department.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/>
- The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services: <http://www.state.nj.us/health/>