

# Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)

## What is it?

MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus.

Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to as “staph,” is a **common** bacterium that can be found on the skin, in the nose and in moist body areas. About one person in five “carries” the bacteria at any given time, and usually it does not make them ill. Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections like minor pimples and boils and can be easily treated with antibiotics. However, staph bacteria also can cause serious infections (such as surgical wound infections, bloodstream infections, and pneumonia).

MRSA is a strain of Staphylococcus aureus that does not respond to treatment with common antibiotics such as penicillin.

## Symptoms:

Most often, MRSA causes infections on the skin. These infections may look like any one of the following:

- Sores that look and feel like spider bites (however MRSA is not caused by a spider bite)
- Large, red, painful bumps under the skin (called boils)
- A cut that is swollen, hot and filled with pus
- Blister filled with fluid (called impetigo)

It is also possible to have MRSA in other areas of the body, such as blood, lungs, eyes, and urine. These types of infections are less common, although often more serious.

**Contagious Period:** A person may spread the disease as long as the sore is draining.

- **School exclusion:** Exclude until all of the following conditions are met:
  - Student has had 24 hours of appropriate antibiotic treatment
  - Sores are no longer draining or can be covered and dressings remain dry

**Treatment:** A physician must be seen.

## Prevent Spread to Others:

- Wash hands frequently, and well.
- Avoid touching or scratching sores.
- Do not handle food.
- Do not participate in contact sports.
- Wash and disinfect all items that have come in contact with the sores.
- All members of the household should bathe daily using soap and his or her own towel and washcloth, and cover lesions if possible.
- Do not share personal items such as razors, clothing, make-up applicators, towels, etc.
- Avoid contact with other people’s cuts and sores.
- Use a barrier between skin and shared equipment e.g. exercise machines and massage tables.

## Websites:

Centers for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/pdf/ar/MRSPatientInfoSheet.pdf>

Texas Department of State Health Services website: [MRSA and Staph](#) *What does it look like?*

**WARNING: GRAPHIC MATERIAL** (<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/health/antibiotic%5Fresistance/mrsa/picpage.asp>)