

# IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

## STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS

*Staphylococcus aureus*, often referred to simply as “staph,” are bacteria commonly carried on the skin, intestines or in the nose of healthy people. Occasionally, staph can cause an infection; staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections in the United States. Some Staph (known as Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA) are resistant to certain antibiotics.

### Symptoms

- Most staph infections are on the skin and appear as a bump, which may look like a spider bite or a pimple full of pus or other drainage. There may also be an infected area on the skin that remains flat but is bright red, painful, swollen, and warm to the touch.
- There may be a fever as well. This is a sign that the skin infection is more serious.
- *Staphylococcus aureus* can invade any organ of the body.

### Transmission

- Staph bacteria and MRSA can spread among people having close skin-to-skin contact with infected people.
- Spread may also occur through indirect contact by touching objects (i.e., towels, sheets, wound dressings, clothes, workout areas, sports equipment) contaminated by a person with staph bacteria on their skin. Even if surfaces or items have staph on them, this does not mean that you will definitely get an infection if you touch these surfaces. The bacteria is most likely to cause problems when you have a cut or scrape that is not covered. The infection can sometimes also get into small, invisible openings in the skin.
- The first cases of MRSA were among hospital patients that usually had other health conditions. Today, MRSA circulates in the community. Cases have occurred among athletes who share equipment, people in crowded living conditions such as prisons and dormitories, and daycares.

### Treatment

- Most staph skin infections can be treated without antibiotics by draining the sore. More severe infections may require antibiotic treatment.
- However, if antibiotics are prescribed, patients should complete the full course and call their doctors if the infection does not get better.
- Patients who are only colonized with staph bacteria or MRSA usually do not need treatment.

### Prevention

- Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water.
- Know the signs of MRSA skin infections and get treated early.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered. Don't touch someone else's wound or bandages.
- Don't share personal items such as towels and razors.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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