

What is Staph?

Staphylococcus aureus is a bacteria commonly found on the skin or in the nose of most people. The *Staph* bacteria can be common causes of minor skin infections such as boils and pimples. In other cases, the *Staph* bacteria can cause a more serious infection.

What is MRSA?

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* is a type of bacteria that does not respond to certain antibiotics such as penicillin or amoxicillin. Although MRSA was once only seen in very ill and hospitalized patients, it has become much more common in the general population and community.

How common is MRSA?

MRSA has been found in a majority of children with skin infections seen in Oakland emergency rooms in recent years. MRSA can occur in athletes - In 2003, five members of the St. Louis Rams NFL football team as well as former San Diego Charger Junior Seau were treated for MRSA infections.

How do I know if I have MRSA and what does a MRSA infection look like?

Initially, you may have a small, coin-sized area of redness, warmth and swelling like a boil or pimple. Occasionally, there may be pus or draining fluid from the area. MRSA infections commonly occur on the thigh, groin and armpits (axilla), but can be found on any part of the body. Sometimes there may be swelling and pain of a joint. In more advanced cases, there may be complaints of moderate to severe pain at the site of the infection, or fever and chills.

What should I do if I think I have MRSA?

Let your athletic trainer know immediately and see your physician or health care provider. MRSA and other skin infections are treatable with antibiotics if seen quickly enough.

How can I get MRSA?

The most common way to get MRSA is through an open or uncovered scrape or skin abrasion. It's important to keep any scrapes clean and covered with a clean bandage.

How can I prevent spreading MRSA if I have it?

- 1. Good hygiene** - Keep your hands clean and prevent spreading MRSA germs by frequently washing your hands for 15 to 30 seconds with warm soapy water. Use a soap dispenser instead of bar soap. If water or soap isn't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer solution.
- 2. Keep cuts covered with clean bandages** - If the cut or wound can't be completely covered, the athlete shouldn't be in contact sports
- 3. Don't share personal items** - MRSA may be transmitted by sharing towels, athletic equipment or other personal items such as razor blades.
- 4. Keep athletic and training equipment clean** - Most current disinfectants will kill MRSA and other bacteria. Use a clean towel on training equipment and to wipe down and dry off equipment when done. Clean larger area equipment such as wrestling mats on a regular basis with a disinfectant and check yourself for any early signs of infection such as a skin area that is red, warm or swollen.

Coastal Sports & Wellness Medical Center is providing this information as a public service. If you would like additional information on MRSA, including posters for the training room, or other sports medicine injury information please contact our office at (858) 678-0300 or visit us on the web at www.coastalsportsmedicine.com

Our physicians are also available for school and athletic department speaking engagements.