



EH&S FACT SHEET

Identification and Transmission

Prevention

Treatment and Further information

M R S A

MRSA is the acronym for [methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*](#), a type of bacteria. *Staphylococcus aureus*, or staph, is very common - so common that 25 to 30 percent of us have it living on our skin at any one time. The MRSA form of staph is a less common variety that does not respond to routine antibiotic treatment. For many years, it was seen primarily in hospitals and long-term care facilities, but in recent years it has become more visible in other settings where people have close physical contact, such as athletic teams.

MRSA skin infections appear first as a small bump, like a pimple or spider bite and then red- den, swell, become painful, and fill with pus. Proper medical treatment of skin lesions usually prevents the infection from becoming more serious. The infection is transmitted through direct contact with infected skin or by handling or sharing items that have come in contact with a draining lesion. General contact with surfaces is not a significant means of transmission. MRSA is not a respiratory illness and is not transmitted through coughs and sneezes like colds and flu.

To prevent the spread of MRSA, the most important step is to thoroughly and frequently wash your hands with soap and water. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective. Don't share personal items like towels or razors and if you have a lesion, keep it tightly covered because the drainage is quite contagious. It is important to properly clean any item that has come in contact with drainage from an infection. Wash towels or clothing in hot water with detergent and clean equipment surfaces with a detergent and a disinfectant like chlorine bleach or quaternary ammonium. Even though surfaces are cleaned routinely in UNCW athletic and recreation facilities, it is a good practice to use a clean towel as a barrier between bare skin and surfaces like weight benches, mats, and exercise equipment. Athletes should be especially aware of breaks to the skin and keep them clean and covered.

If you are concerned about a skin infection and think it may be MRSA, consult your health care provider. UNCW students should go to Student Health Services and employees should contact their family physician. For more information, including links with general community information and guidance specific to athletic and recreation concerns, visit these websites.

http://www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/gcdc/ca_mrsa/ca_mrsa.html

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_ca_public.html

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