FAQs
(frequently asked questions)

about
"MRSA"
(Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)

What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus (pronounced *staff-ill-oh-KOK-us AW-ree-us*), or "*Staph*" is a very common germ that about 1 out of every 3 people have on their skin or in their nose. This germ does not cause any problems for most people who have it on their skin. But sometimes it can cause serious infections such as skin or wound infections, pneumonia, or infections of the blood.

Antibiotics are given to kill Staph germs when they cause infections. Some *Staph* are resistant, meaning they cannot be killed by some antibiotics. "Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*" or "MRSA" is a type of *Staph* that is resistant to some of the antibiotics that are often used to treat *Staph* infections.

Who is most likely to get an MRSA infection?

In the hospital, people who are more likely to get an MRSA infection are people who:

- have other health conditions making them sick
- have been in the hospital or a nursing home
- have been treated with antibiotics.

People who are healthy and who have not been in the hospital or a nursing home can also get MRSA infections. These infections usually involve the skin. More information about this type of MRSA infection, known as "community-associated MRSA" infection, is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa

How do I get an MRSA infection?

People who have MRSA germs on their skin or who are infected with MRSA may be able to spread the germ to other people. MRSA can be passed on to bed linens, bed rails, bathroom fixtures, and medical equipment. It can spread to other people on contaminated equipment and on the hands of doctors, nurses, other healthcare providers and visitors.

Can MRSA infections be treated?

Yes, there are antibiotics that can kill MRSA germs. Some patients with MRSA abscesses may need surgery to drain the infection. Your healthcare provider will determine which treatments are best for you.

What are some of the things that hospitals are doing to prevent MRSA infections?

To prevent MRSA infections, doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers:

- **Clean their hands** with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after caring for every patient.
- Carefully **clean hospital rooms and medical equipment**.
- Use **Contact Precautions** when caring for patients with MRSA. Contact Precautions mean:
  - Whenever possible, patients with MRSA will have a single room or will share a room only with someone else who also has MRSA.
  - Healthcare providers will put on gloves and wear a gown over their clothing while taking care of patients with MRSA.
  - Visitors may also be asked to wear a gown and gloves.
  - When leaving the room, hospital providers and visitors remove their gown and gloves and clean their hands.
  - Patients on Contact Precautions are asked to stay in their hospital rooms as much as possible. They should not go to common areas, such as the gift shop or cafeteria. They may go to other areas of the hospital for treatments and tests.
- **May test** some patients to see if they have MRSA on their skin. This test involves rubbing a cotton-tipped swab in the patient's nostrils or on the skin.

What can I do to help prevent MRSA infections?

In the hospital

- Make sure that all doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after caring for you.

> If you do not see your healthcare providers clean their hands, please ask them to do so.

When you go home

- If you have wounds or an intravascular device (such as a catheter or dialysis port) make sure that you know how to take care of them.

Can my friends and family get MRSA when they visit me?

The chance of getting MRSA while visiting a person who has MRSA is very low. To decrease the chance of getting MRSA your family and friends should:

- Clean their hands before they enter your room and when they leave.
- Ask a healthcare provider if they need to wear protective gowns and gloves when they visit you.

What do I need to do when I go home from the hospital?

To prevent another MRSA infection and to prevent spreading MRSA to others:

- Keep taking any antibiotics prescribed by your doctor. Don't take half-doses or stop before you complete your prescribed course.
- Clean your hands often, especially before and after changing your wound dressing or bandage.
- People who live with you should clean their hands often as well.
- Keep any wounds clean and change bandages as instructed until healed.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.
- Wash and dry your clothes and bed linens in the warmest temperatures recommended on the labels.
- Tell your healthcare providers that you have MRSA. This includes home health nurses and aides, therapists, and personnel in doctors' offices.
- Your doctor may have more instructions for you.

If you have questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.

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