

Title: What is Community Acquired MRSA?

Author: Manik Chhabra, MS3

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Abstract: Community Acquired Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (CA-MRSA) has become a common cause of skin and soft tissue infections in the outpatient setting. This education tool is designed to inform patients about common presentations of MRSA, treatments, and prevention methods.

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What is Community Acquired MRSA?

Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA – sometimes called “*mersa*”) is a type of bacteria that is hard to treat with certain antibiotics. This bacterium has become more common in recent years perhaps due to overuse or misuse of antibiotics.

Types of MRSA

There are two types of MRSA:

- Hospital-Acquired MRSA (HA-MRSA)
- Community-Acquired MRSA (CA-MRSA)

The type is defined by the place you acquire the bacteria. HA-MRSA is often more difficult to treat and has a more severe course.

What does CA-MRSA cause?

MRSA will cause different infections depending on the site of contact. The most common type of CA-MRSA infection is of the skin.

A person may be colonized with MRSA – which means the bacteria will live on a part of her body (inside the nose or on the skin) – but she will not be sick.

An infection will occur if someone who is colonized with MRSA gets a scrape or cut on the skin; or, if someone with a cut comes in contact with a MRSA carrier.

Signs of a MRSA infection

A CA-MRSA infection on the skin may look like a “normal” *Staphylococcus* (“staph”) infection, but may take longer to heal and require different antibiotic treatments.

A skin infection may be

- Swollen, warm, red, and painful; and/or,
- A red bump that may be filled with pus (it could look like a spider bite)

It may be a MRSA infection if

- The skin infection shows little improvement after 2 or 3 days of treatment;
- It spreads rapidly; or,
- You had a previous MRSA infection.

What are Treatments for MRSA?

Treatment for a MRSA infection may involve antibiotics and/or “incision and drainage” (cutting open the infected area letting the wound drain). There are several antibiotics that are still effective in treating MRSA infections.

If given antibiotics it is important to complete the entire treatment!

How do I prevent the spread of MRSA?

- Avoid sharing personal items (towels, sports equipment, razors, clothes).
- Wash laundry in hot, soapy water with bleach and dry completely.
- Keep wounds covered and clean until they have healed.
- Avoid touching others’ wounds or bandages.
- Wash your hands!

Who is at risk of MRSA infections?

Anyone may be colonized with MRSA; though some people are at greater risk of infection:

- People with weak immune systems (AIDS patients, Diabetics, Cancer patients, Severe Asthmatics, etc.)
- Athletes in contact sports (Wrestling, Soccer, Basketball, etc)
- Young children and the elderly.
- Persons staying in a health care facility for an extended period of time
- Prisoners or anyone living in confined space with other people.

For More Information:

Medline Plus: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/mrsa.html#cat27>

MayoClinic.com: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/mrsa/ID00049>

Compiled by:

Manik Chhabra, MS3

University of MN Medical School.

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