

## MRSA: A Guide for Care

*Staphylococcus aureus*, or staph, is a common bacteria normally found on the skin and in the nose of healthy people. However, if staph enters the body, an infection can develop. Some staph bacteria may become resistant, making the infection more difficult to treat.

### About MRSA:

MRSA can be found almost anywhere — on the skin, in the nose, in pimples and boils, in sputum, blood, and urine, and on environmental surfaces. Anyone can get MRSA, especially people with a weakened immune system.

The symptoms of MRSA infection are similar to other signs of infection. Frequently, a community-acquired MRSA skin infection looks like a spider bite, but the infection is caused by the MRSA bacteria.

Symptoms include:

- Red, warm and tender areas on the skin
- Fever and chills
- Wound drainage

Many people with MRSA have no signs of illness or infection, but carry the bacteria on their skin or in their nose. Even if no actual infection is present, these people can spread MRSA to others. Most often, MRSA spreads by contaminated hands.

### Treating MRSA and Preventing the Spread of Infection:

Several different antibiotics are available to treat MRSA. Therefore, tests to identify the best treatment options for your loved one are performed. MRSA can, at times, go away without treatment.

To prevent the spread of MRSA, the patient should remain alone in a room at home. The patient, family members and visitors should frequently wash hands for 40 to 60 seconds or use a hand sanitizer to disinfect hands. Hand sanitizer should contain at least 60 percent alcohol content and can be found in the hand soap section at most stores. Caregivers should perform hand hygiene before and after providing care. Gloves should be worn to handle any dressings and discarded dressings should be placed in a tied plastic bag. It is important to always wash hands or use hand sanitizer after removing gloves.

Follow these tips to prevent the spread of MRSA:

- Avoid touching dirty items prior to touching clean items or environmental surfaces.
- A clean environment, including personal items, is important! Clean hard surfaces with a store-bought disinfectant or use a mixture of bleach solution:  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup bleach to  $2\frac{1}{4}$  cup water (mixed fresh every day). Let the surface air dry.
- Change clothing daily and wash before wearing again. Launder clothes using hot water, detergent, bleach and use a hot dryer temperature. Disinfect washer with bleach after using.
- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer immediately before leaving home. Avoid touching the inside of your nose and any environmental surfaces after hand disinfection.
- Because it is important to protect others from MRSA, if the patient visits another doctor, hospital or healthcare provider, tell the provider of the history of MRSA infection and where it is (or was) found (for example, in the urine, nose, lungs).

Call Empath Health with any questions (888) 855-2838:

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