



Information Provided By:  
Dr. Diana T. Yu  
Health Officer

## Methicillin-Resistant Staph Aureus (MRSA) Facts

### What is *Staphylococcus aureus* (staph)?

- *Staphylococcus aureus*, often referred to simply as "staph," are bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people.
- Approximately 25% to 30% of the population is colonized (when bacteria are present, but not causing an infection) in the nose with staph bacteria.
- Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections in the United States and can also cause serious infections (such as surgical wound infections, bloodstream infections, and pneumonia).

### What is MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)?

- Some staph bacteria are resistant to antibiotics.
- MRSA is a type of staph that is resistant to antibiotics called beta-lactams, which include methicillin and other antibiotics such as penicillin and amoxicillin.

### Who gets staph or MRSA infections?

- Anyone can get staph or MRSA.
- Staph infections, including MRSA, can occur among persons in hospitals and healthcare facilities who have weakened immune systems.
- MRSA infections that are acquired by persons outside of hospitals and healthcare facilities who **have not** been recently (within the past year) hospitalized or had a medical procedure (such as dialysis, surgery, catheters) are known as community-associated MRSA (CA-MRSA).
- Staph or MRSA infections in the community are usually manifested as skin infections, such as pimples and boils, and occur in otherwise healthy people.
- Factors that have been associated with the spread of MRSA skin infections include: close skin-to-skin contact, openings in the skin such as cuts or abrasions, contaminated items and surfaces, crowded living conditions, and poor hygiene.

### What does a staph or MRSA infection look like?

- Staph bacteria, including MRSA, can cause skin infections that may look like a pimple or boil and can be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. More serious infections may cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or surgical wound infections.

### How can I prevent staph or MRSA skin infections?

#### Prevention steps:

1. Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
2. Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
3. Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
4. Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.
5. Use a barrier (e.g., clothing or a towel) between your skin and shared equipment
6. Wipe surfaces of equipment with a disinfectant before and after use.

Mason County Public Health  
303 Nth 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Shelton, WA 98584  
(360) 427-9670

[www.co.mason.wa.us](http://www.co.mason.wa.us)

11/06/2007