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Health Department

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## Staph Infection and MRSA

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### What is Staphylococcus aureus (staph)?

*Staphylococcus aureus*, often called "staph," is a common type of bacteria carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Approximately 25% to 30% of the population have this bacteria present in their nose. Sometimes, staph can cause an infection. Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections in the United States.

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

MRSA is a type of staph bacteria that has become resistant to common antibiotics.

### Where does MRSA come from?

In the past, MRSA has occurred primarily in persons who have been recently hospitalized or had medical procedures (such as dialysis, surgery, catheters). People who need these procedures may be ill and have weakened immunity, and the procedures themselves provide opening into the body for infections.

More recently, Community-Associated cases are acquired outside of the hospital in many community settings where overcrowding or skin-to-skin contact is common.

### What are the symptoms of staph?

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

### How prevalent is MRSA?

Because MRSA is not reportable, the Health Department does not know how many cases exist at a certain time. When diseases emerge sufficiently or become an outbreak, the State Health Department may add them to mandated notifiable lists.

### How is staph/MRSA treated?

If you have a sore that will not heal, see a healthcare provider. This is especially important if the symptoms of a MRSA infection are accompanied by a fever. Most staph and MRSA infections are treatable with certain antibiotics. If you are given an antibiotic, take all of the doses, even if the infection is getting better, unless your doctor tells you to stop taking it. Do not share antibiotics with other people or save unfinished antibiotics to use at another time.

### How can you prevent staph/MRSA?

**Clean your hands.** You, and others in close contact, should wash hands frequently with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after changing the bandage or touching the infected wound.

**Cover your wound.** Keep wounds that are draining or have pus covered with clean, dry bandages. Pus from infected wounds can contain staph and MRSA, so keeping the infection covered will help prevent the spread to others.

**Do not share personal items.** Avoid sharing personal items such as soap, towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, or uniforms that may have had contact with the infected wound or bandage. Wash sheets, towels, and clothes that become soiled in water and laundry detergent. Drying clothes in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying, also helps kill bacteria in clothes.

### How can I get more information on staph/MRSA?

For more information on staph/MRSA, call the Sedgwick County Health Department Epidemiology Office at 660-7392.

Or visit the Sedgwick County website at [www.sedgwickcounty.org](http://www.sedgwickcounty.org).