



L. BROOKS PATTERSON, OAKLAND COUNTY EXECUTIVE

HEALTH DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

HEALTH DIVISION  
George J. Miller, M.A., Manager

October 30, 2007

Dear Parent:

Oakland County Health Division would like to provide you with information regarding MRSA and how to help reduce its occurrence.

MRSA is not a new health problem. Staph infections and MRSA has been around for decades. Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections in the United States. 25 to 30 % of healthy people carry staph bacteria on their skin and in the nose without getting infected, and about 1% carry the MRSA strain without any problems.

Increased awareness results in more identification and reporting of cases in local areas. While the risk of contracting the disease is small, it reinforces the importance of proper hygiene and disinfection practices because MRSA is a community health issue.

The majority of MRSA infections occur in hospitals but it is becoming more common in community settings. MRSA can occur anywhere.

MRSA spreads by close skin-to-skin contact, through open cuts or scrapes or by touching an item or surface (i.e. towels, clothing, and bandages) that has come into contact with the infected person. It may look like a pimple, boil and is sometimes mistaken for a "spider bite". Typically MRSA is successfully treated, however when people have a poor immune system or other medical condition, pneumonia or other serious problems can occur.

It is easy to protect yourself and others from MRSA by practicing good hygiene.

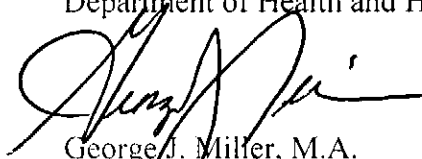
- Wash hands with soap and water or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water is not available.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean. Cover with a bandage until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, razors, deodorant, clothing and bandages.
- Reduce skin to surface contact in health clubs, gyms, and public showers by wearing shoes or using paper towel to touch handles, etc.
- Disinfect surfaces and equipment before and after use.

All of Oakland County's school districts have done an exceptional job disinfecting buildings and enforcing proper hygiene. The Health Division will continue to work with schools, and other facilities in the community to encourage these protective measures.

More information about MRSA is available on the Health Division's website at [www.oakgov.com/health](http://www.oakgov.com/health). Individuals can also contact our Nurse-On-Call at 248-858-1406.

Sincerely,

OAKLAND COUNTY HEALTH DIVISION  
Department of Health and Human Services



George J. Miller, M.A.  
Manager/Health Officer



Carolyn Bird, M.D., MPH  
Chief of Medical Services

Encl: (1) MRSA Fact Sheet/ Hand Washing Instructions

# PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



## MRSA

(Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)

### What is MRSA?

*Staphylococcus aureus* ("staph") is a common type of bacteria (germ) that can be found on the skin and in the nose of healthy people. It may cause skin infections in wounds or other sites in the body. MRSA is a type of staph infection that is often found in hospitals or other healthcare settings. It is resistant to certain antibiotics making it harder to treat. A Community Acquired (CA)-MRSA infection is found in persons who **have not** been hospitalized or had a medical procedure such as surgery or dialysis within the past year.

### How is MRSA spread?

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, poor hygiene and medical procedures or a stay in the hospital.

### What do MRSA infections look like?

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

### How is MRSA treated?

Many staph skin infections may be treated by your doctor by draining the abscess or boil. This should only be done by a healthcare provider.

Other staph and MRSA infections may require treatment with 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.

If, after visiting your doctor, the infection is not better within a few days, let your doctor know. If people you know or live with seem to have the same infection, encourage them to go to their doctor.

### How can MRSA be prevented?

Practice good hygiene:

- Keep hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.
- Use a barrier between skin and shared equipment in health clubs, saunas and gymnasiums.
- Avoid illegal IV drug use.

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# HAND WASHING INSTRUCTIONS

Use SOAP and RUNNING WATER

RUB your hands vigorously for 20 seconds

WASH ALL SURFACES, including:

- backs of hands
- wrists
- between fingers
- under fingernails

RINSE well

DRY hands with a paper towel

Turn off the water using a PAPER TOWEL instead of bare hands

**For more information on MRSA, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.**

For additional copies, visit our website at [www.oakgov.com/health](http://www.oakgov.com/health) or contact:

Pontiac Office  
1200 N. Telegraph Road  
Pontiac, MI 48341-0432  
(248) 858-1308

Walled Lake Office  
1010 E. West Maple Road  
Walled Lake, MI 48390-3588

Southfield Office  
27725 Greenfield Road  
Southfield, MI 48076-3625  
(248) 424-7031

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