

## ● MRSA Prevention Steps:

### Caring for the Infected Site:

- Keep draining wounds clean and covered.
- Wash any cut or break in the skin with soap and water and apply a clean bandage daily.
- Dispose of bandages with regular household waste.
- Report new skin sores or boils to your doctor immediately.

### General Personal Hygiene:

- Wash your hands and forearms before and after touching the wound and frequently throughout the day. Use soap and warm water for 15 seconds and dry your hands on a clean towel or paper towels
- Bathe regularly and do not share bath towels or washcloths.
- Avoid using soap dishes to store bath products.
- Avoid sharing personal items (ex. razors, clothing)
- Wear clean clothing.
- Shower immediately after each workout or competition.
- Ask gym staff about routine cleaning schedules for shared exercise equipment.
- Sports gear (ex. helmets, gloves, belts) that is non-washable should be wiped down with disinfectants after each use.
- Avoid sharing drinks and utensils before they are cleaned.
- Bring your own workout equipment if possible (ex. towels, gloves) and wash after every use and wipe down equipment with disinfectants after each use.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers often.
- Wear protective shoes while showering in community showers.

**For more information, go to:**

[www.sa.sc.edu/shs](http://www.sa.sc.edu/shs)  
Student Health Services

[www.scdhec.gov](http://www.scdhec.gov)  
SC Department of Health and Environmental Control

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTH CAROLINA

Student Health Services • Division of Student Affairs and Department of Academic Support • Printed 2007  
The University of South Carolina is an equal opportunity institution.

**Student prevention guide to**

# CA-MRSA

*Community-associated methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus*



Thomson Student Health Center  
Counseling & Human Development Center  
Campus Wellness Promotion  
Sexual Health & Violence Prevention

## ● What is *Staphylococcus aureus*?

*Staphylococcus aureus* is a type of bacteria that lives in the nose and on the skin of about one in every five people.

## ● What does methicillin-resistance mean?

Some staph bacteria are resistant to antibiotics. Methicillin resistance means that the antibiotic methicillin (an antibiotic in the same class as penicillin) and other related antibiotics do not kill these bacteria. These are called “MRSA” for methicillin-resistance *Staphylococcus aureus*.

## ● What does Community-associated mean?

Community-associated (CA) infections are infections acquired by people who have not been recently hospitalized or had a medical procedure within the past year. MRSA infections in the community usually appear as skin infections and can occur in otherwise healthy people.

CA-MRSA infections have been documented among athletes, college students, gym participants, military recruits, daycare attendees, IV drug users, and others who live in crowded settings or routinely share contaminated items.

## ● How is MRSA spread?

You can pick up MRSA from contact with people who already have it. You can carry it in your nose and on your skin for weeks to months.

MRSA is spread through direct physical contact with an infected individual or by touching objects (clothing, towels, razors, exercise equipment) that may be contaminated with the bacteria.

It is also possible for a preexisting cut or other irritated area on the skin to develop an infection with MRSA if the area is not kept clean and dry.

Outbreaks of MRSA have occurred in schools, sports teams, and daycare centers where people have close contact and share equipment and personal items. Both the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have identified CA-MRSA as an emerging problem for athletic and other community participants.

## ● What are the symptoms of MRSA?

A skin infection with CA-MRSA can begin as a reddened area on the skin, or resemble a pimple, often occurring in the armpits, groin, neck or buttocks. It often resembles a spider bite.

## ● What kinds of problems can MRSA cause?

MRSA can cause infections such as skin infections, pneumonia, or infections of the blood. Skin infections are the most common type of infection with this bacterium. The infected area usually begins with a small bump that resembles a pimple or insect bite, which becomes red and full of pus. The area can develop into a skin abscess or boil causing fever, pus, swelling or pain.

## ● Are MRSA infections treatable?

Yes. Most MRSA skin infections may also be treated by draining the abscess or boil. Only healthcare providers should drain skin boils or abscesses. MRSA infections are treatable with antibiotics. Make sure you take all of the antibiotic doses, even if the infection is getting better, unless your doctor tells you to stop taking it.

## ● Is it possible that my MRSA infection will come back after it has healed?

Yes. It is possible to have a MRSA skin infection come back after it has healed. To prevent this from happening, follow your healthcare provider’s directions while you have the infection, and follow the prevention steps after the infection is gone.