

Diagnosis and Treatment of Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

Staphylococcus aureus (often called “staph”) is part of the normal bacteria that normally reside in or on humans and does not usually cause infection. When bacteria are living on or in the human body, but are not causing infection, it is called “colonization.” Humans are most often colonized with staph in their noses and it is also found on the skin and other body sites. MRSA is a type of staph infection that is resistant to treatment with usual antibiotics.

Diagnosis

You would not usually be tested for staph or MRSA unless you have an infection. If you have a skin infection, your doctor may take a sample of the area to find out what bacteria are causing your infection. The lab will then test the bacteria to find out which antibiotic is best for you.

If you notice a pimple-like lesion, a boil, an infected hair follicle, an area that looks like an infected spider or mosquito bite that progresses to a painful, swollen, reddened area, contact your doctor.

Treatment

Some skin infections do not require treatment, but others require incision and drainage of the infected site and/or antibiotic treatment.

If your doctor or health care provider prescribes antibiotics, it is important that you take all the doses that are prescribed. Do not share the medicine with other family members.

If your MRSA infection keeps coming back or does not get better, your doctor may test you and your family members to see if you are colonized with MRSA. In this case, the doctor would take a culture from the nose or other areas where staph is often found.

Care of infections

Keep the infected area covered with clean, dry bandages. Pus or drainage from wounds is very infectious. Throw used bandages away immediately.

Clean your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially before and after changing your bandages or touching the drainage. Throw used dressings away promptly.

Disinfect all surfaces that come in contact with drainage or infected area with solution of bleach water (one part bleach to nine parts water).