

# Understanding MRSA

## What is MRSA?

Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus, or MRSA, is a type of "super bug" caused by a strain of staph bacteria that can cause skin infections. It is considered dangerous because it can be resistant to some antibiotics (including penicillin), making it difficult to treat. It often begins as a painful skin boil and is highly contagious. It has become prevalent in contact sports because of the skin-to-skin contact.

## How do you get MRSA?

Individuals can get MRSA by touching MRSA-infected skin or surfaces that have MRSA on them. You should avoid sharing hygiene items (bar soap, towels and razors) and sports equipment. Sometimes individuals will contract MRSA by overusing antibiotics, by stopping them early or missing doses.

## What does it look like?

MRSA can look like a spider bite, infected skin, a boil, an abscess or impetigo.

## How is MRSA treated?

A healthcare provider can treat MRSA by draining the infection and/or by prescribing an antibiotic to help reduce the bacteria on your skin.

## These are symptoms of a severe head injury – call 911

- Wash your hands often with warm, soapy water.
- Use 60 percent (or greater) alcohol-based hand gel when soap and water are not available.
- Shower after participating in exercise or sports.
- Clean sports equipment after each use.
- Clean surfaces frequently that may come in contact with skin (chairs, tables, toilet seats, etc.).\*\*
- Wipe down high hand-touch surfaces frequently - door knobs, phones, keyboards, etc. \*\*
- Take antibiotics only when you need them. If they are prescribed, take them all.
- Do not share personal hygiene items or clothing.
- Avoid contact with other people's skin infections.
- Keep skin infections covered with clean, dry bandages taped on all four sides.
- Stay home from work/school if you have draining infections that require bandage changes during work/school hours.

\*\*Use an EPA registered cleaner.

## For more information, follow these links:

- [CDC: MRSA Info for Coaches & Athletic Directors](#)
- [Living with MRSA Booklet](#)
- [Infection Control Checklist for School Athletic Programs](#)



**UnityPoint Health**  
St. Luke's Hospital

**Sports Medicine**  
1026 A Ave. NE  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52402

[unitypoint.org/cedarrapids](http://unitypoint.org/cedarrapids)