

MRSA in Health Care Settings

Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and University of Washington Medical Center

What is MRSA?

- **MRSA** stands for Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.
- This type of bacteria causes “staph” infections that are hard to treat with usual antibiotics.
- MRSA can be treated with antibiotics. Often, more than one type of antibiotic is needed.



Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria resist treatment with usual antibiotics.

How is MRSA spread?

- The most common source of infection is contact with people who already have MRSA or who are *colonized*. Colonized means they carry the MRSA bacteria on their bodies but do not show any signs of infection.

MRSA can be spread by contact with their skin, mucous membranes, or any of their body fluids such as blood or wound drainage.

- MRSA can also be spread by touching objects or surfaces that the person who carries MRSA has touched.

What are the symptoms of MRSA?

- Symptoms may include redness, warmth, swelling, tenderness, boils or blisters, fever, and chills. MRSA infections are sometimes mistaken for spider bites.
- Tell your nurse if you have any of these symptoms.

Who is most likely to get MRSA?

- Patients who have had an invasive medical procedure, such as surgery.
- Patients with weakened immune systems who are being treated in hospitals and other health care facilities, such as nursing homes and dialysis centers.

How are UWMC patients and visitors protected?

- People who are infected or colonized with MRSA are placed on “contact precautions.” This means anyone who has physical contact with them or with anything they touch must wear a gown and gloves. See the Contact Precautions sign near their door.
- Patients who are colonized or infected with MRSA are asked to stay in their room unless they need treatment in another part of the hospital. When they do leave their room, they are asked to wash their hands and wear a gown and gloves.



Handwashing and Gelling Are Important!

- The main way MRSA is spread is by hands – especially the hands of health care workers.
- Alcohol hand gel is found at the door to all patient rooms. At UWMC, we have a policy of “gel in, gel out” for all hospital staff, and we ask all visitors to do the same.
- We hope that you will ask all your health care workers and visitors if they have washed their hands when they enter your room. Help us protect you from MRSA!