



Guidelines for Reducing the Spread of Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* in Non-Healthcare Settings

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Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is a bacterium that evolved from the more common “Staph” bacterium, and in this process, it developed resistance to several important antibiotics. This makes MRSA infections more difficult to treat.

MRSA infections occur primarily among patients in hospitals and nursing homes, however, infections have recently been reported in increasing numbers among persons of all ages in other settings. These infections are referred to as “community-associated MRSA” (CAMRSA) and they are often misdiagnosed as spider bites.

The transmission of CAMRSA is associated with direct skin-on-skin contact, however, the bacteria can be transferred to environmental surfaces via bare skin contact. Outbreaks of CAMRSA have been reported in persons exposed to the bacteria in settings where contamination of equipment and sharing of personal items might have contributed to transmission. Personal contact due to close living spaces (e.g., detention facilities, and camps) also facilitates the spread of CAMRSA.

Guidelines

Practice good hygiene

- Wash hands thoroughly using soap and water, especially after any hands-on contact with other persons. Alternatively, an alcohol-based hand rub can be used according to label instructions. Visibly soiled hands should be washed with soap and water rather than with an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Dry hands with paper towels or air blowers (e.g., avoid sharing towels).
- Keep skin lesions (e.g., insect bites, open sores) covered with a dressing.
- Limit sharing of personal items (e.g. towels, clothing, and soap).

Shared equipment

- Use a barrier (e.g., a towel or a layer of clothing) between the skin and shared equipment (e.g. exercise machines, treatment tables).
- Shower if you have had substantial skin-on-skin contact with others.
- Wipe surfaces of shared equipment before and after use, especially if the surface has become wet with sweat. Clean and disinfect frequently touched equipment surfaces daily to remove soil.
- Repair or dispose of equipment and furniture with damaged surfaces that cannot be adequately cleaned.

Shared equipment (continued)

- Allow steam rooms/saunas to dry at least once a day. This will help to minimize the development of a bacterial biofilm.
- When painting wooden surfaces, use waterproof paint. This seals and smoothes surfaces, facilitates drying, thereby reducing bacterial growth.
- For public swimming pools, spas and other basins or tanks, use a level of chlorine recommended by California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Section 65529, which requires a free chlorine residual of at least 1.0 parts per million (ppm) and a pH between 7.2 and 8.0.

Laundry

- Wash shared linens (e.g., towels, sheets, blankets, or uniforms) in detergent and water at least 160° F for at least 25 minutes, or if a lower temperature wash cycle is selected, use laundry detergent that is appropriate for cold or warm water cycles.
- Use laundry additives according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Use a mechanical dryer on hot temperature cycle (i.e., avoid air drying).
- Distribute towels, uniforms, etc. only when they are completely dry.

Use of Disinfectants on Surfaces

- Check the product's label to ensure that the disinfectant is suitable for the type of surface being treated (e.g., vinyl, cloth, plastic, or wood).
- Check that the product label specifies *Staphylococcus aureus* (many over the counter disinfectant products sold in grocery stores, pharmacies, and warehouse stores will have a label claim for *Staphylococcus aureus* and other bacteria).
- Ensure that the disinfectant is prepared in the proper concentration and remains on the surface of the equipment for the recommended contact time.
- Unused working solutions of disinfectant can be poured down the drain. Disposable wipe cloths can be discarded as a routine solid waste.
- For nonporous surfaces (e.g., tile, stainless steel, epoxy, and linoleum) use an EPA-registered detergent disinfectant suitable for the surface. Alternatively, a 1:100 dilution of household bleach can be used.
- For wood surfaces, scrub and disinfect with 1:10 dilution of household bleach. Bleach solutions should be left on surfaces for at least 10 minutes to achieve full disinfection.

More Information

For more information about CAMRSA, contact the Department of Public Health, which can be reached at the web site <http://lapublichealth.org/acd/MRSA.htm>, and by telephone at (213) 240-7941.