

Information for Patients with Staph Aureus Skin Infection

Including “MRSA”

- **Staphylococcal aureus bacteria** commonly live on body surfaces, but don't usually cause infection unless they enter the body, often through a break in the skin. Staph infections can spread to others by skin-to-skin contact and from shared items such as towels, soap, clothes, utensils, sports equipment, etc.
- **Staph skin infections can look like swollen, warm, red, or tender sores, or infected wounds, and are often readily treated without complication. If left untreated, infection can spread** to other areas of the body including internal organs and become much more serious.
- Methicillin resistant Staph aureus (**MRSA**) **bacteria are so called because they do not respond to treatment with certain antibiotics. MRSA causes the same types of infections as other staph aureus bacteria**, but if antibiotics are needed, the choice of antibiotics that can be effective is much more limited.
- MRSA infections acquired outside the hospital in otherwise healthy people are becoming **much more common**. The development of antibiotic resistance in strains of bacteria (such as MRSA) is more likely if antibiotics are used improperly or when they aren't medically necessary.
- **Staph infections should always be evaluated and cared for by a licensed medical provider.** Treatment may include wound care, medical incision & drainage, and sometimes, but not always, antibiotics.

To prevent the spread of infection to other parts of the body or to others:

- Keep wounds and sores covered with clean, dry bandages until they are healed.
- Keep fingernails short and clean, and don't pick at, squeeze, or try to drain sores yourself.
- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and warm water (or an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water aren't available), especially after touching infected skin or bandages. Shower daily, washing carefully from head to toe. People in close contact with you should do the same.
- Don't share items such as towels, bar soap, tweezers, make-up, razors, clothing, bedding, or other items that may have come in contact with your skin.
- Put used bandages in a separate tightly closed trash bag right away and deposit in the regular garbage.
- Avoid contact sports or other close skin to skin contact if you have open, uncovered or draining wounds, and don't use shared equipment, benches, hot tubs, etc. until your sores can be fully covered or are healed.
- Disinfect non-disposable items and surfaces that may have come in contact with the wound or wound drainage after each use; clean frequently touched surfaces (bathrooms, door knobs, phones, etc.) daily with a solution of one tablespoon of household bleach mixed in one quart of water (must be prepared fresh each day) or a store-bought, household disinfectant cleanser labeled as effective against staph aureus.
- Wash soiled linens and clothes with hot water, detergent and bleach, and dry them completely.
- If you have MRSA, inform your coach, athletic trainer and any healthcare providers you are seeing.
- Follow all your healthcare providers' instructions.
- **Return to the Student Health Center or other healthcare provider if your infection gets worse, isn't getting better, you develop more symptoms, a fever, or have other concerns.**
- **If someone close to you is infected**, follow these hygiene guidelines to reduce the risk of transmission. Visit the Student Health Center or other healthcare provider if you think you might be developing symptoms.

SSU Student Health Center Phone: 707 664-2921