This fact sheet provides general information on methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA).¹

**What is methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)?**

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is an antibiotic-resistant, opportunist pathogen that is known to survive on surfaces and is found most often in healthcare settings. This infection has also been shown to infect healthy persons not in healthcare settings. When this occurs it is called a community-associated methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (CA-MRSA) infection. CA-MRSA is most often manifested as skin infections such as abscesses, boils, and other pus-filled lesions.

**Major sources of transmission**

- Transmission can occur as a result of skin-to-skin contact or contact with shared surfaces or items such as towels or bandages.
- Infection may occur when a cut or scrape comes in contact with the bacteria on unsterilized or improperly cleaned surfaces. Despite this risk, the role of contaminated objects has been overstressed.
- Unclean hands are the most common method for transmitting the infection.

**Initial symptoms of MRSA infection**

- MRSA can cause skin infections that may look like a pimple or boil and can be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage.
- More serious infections may cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or surgical wound infections.
- MRSA also produces toxins that can cause gastroenteritis (upset stomach) following ingestion of contaminated foods.

**Risk factors for MRSA infection**

The following factors increase the risk of infection:

- Spending time in crowded areas such as healthcare facilities, schools, dormitories, military barracks, correctional facilities, and daycare centers.
- Having frequent skin-to-skin contact, especially with skin cuts or abrasions.
- Contact with contaminated items and surfaces.
- Lack of cleanliness.

**Prevention of MRSA infection**

- Practice good hygiene. Ensure the availability of sanitary facilities and supplies that encourage cleanliness. Instruct individuals to keep their hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Ensure routine housekeeping guidelines are followed.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people’s wounds or bandages.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as clothing and personal protective equipment.
- Ensure contaminated equipment and surfaces are cleaned with detergent-based cleaners or disinfectants registered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and included on the EPA’s “List H,” available at [http://www.epa.gov/oppad001/list_h_mrsa_vre.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/oppad001/list_h_mrsa_vre.pdf).
Treating MRSA infection

- Many staphylococcal skin infections may be treated by draining the abscess or boil and sometimes do not require antibiotics. Only trained healthcare providers should drain skin boils or abscesses.

Building care following a confirmed MRSA case

- Surfaces contaminated with MRSA bacteria can be easily disinfected using routine cleaning procedures (see the last bullet under the prevention section above). Buildings do not need cleaning by an outside contractor following a known MRSA case. Staph bacteria are extremely common in and on humans.

Policies for meetinghouse nurseries

- Children or workers who are infected with MRSA do not need to be routinely excluded from the nursery.
- Individuals with open wounds should keep them covered with clean, dry bandages that are taped on all four sides. Bandages should be changed at home.
- Nursery workers and children should practice good personal hygiene and wash their hands as needed with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Potentially contaminated surfaces such as changing tables, play tables, high chairs, and doorknobs should be cleaned with an EPA-registered disinfectant labeled effective against MRSA (from list H; see link identified in the prevention tips above), and manufacturer’s directions should be followed. Bleach is not an authorized disinfectant in LDS meetinghouses.
- Toys should be cleaned and sanitized as needed. Also, avoid sharing teething toys and pacifiers among children.

References