

Stay Ahead of the Game



MRSA Q&A

Michael D. Green, MD, MPH, of our Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, answers some common questions about MRSA. This school year, stay ahead of the game — know the causes of MRSA, recognize its symptoms and take steps to prevent it.

Q: What is MRSA?

A: MRSA is methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, a potentially dangerous type of staph bacteria that is resistant to certain antibiotics and may cause skin and other infections. There are two types of MRSA: Community-Associated MRSA (CA-MRSA) and Health Care-Associated MRSA (HA-MRSA).

Q: How is MRSA spread?

A: MRSA can be spread through skin-to-skin contact, especially if it comes into contact with an open wound, contact with items that an infected person has touched or through the respiratory tract. MRSA thrives in the gym and locker room, where kids share sports equipment, towels and toiletries.

Q: What are the symptoms of MRSA?

A: An infection may appear as an area of tiny red bumps, boils or pimples that may resemble a spider bite, and the infection frequently is found on the stomach, buttocks or legs. Some strains of MRSA may cause more serious illness and require a trip to the hospital.

Defense Is Key — Don't Share:

- Sports equipment
- Water bottles
- Towels
- Cell phones
- Lip balm
- Razors
- Clothes
- Deodorant
- Soap

Q: What steps should I take if I think my child has MRSA?

A: Wash the infected area thoroughly with antiseptic soap, apply over-the-counter antibiotic ointment and cover with a dry, clean bandage. Still concerned? Contact the pediatrician — he or she will evaluate your child, determine if he or she has MRSA and prescribe appropriate treatment(s).

Q: Are there public places where MRSA is more commonly spread?

A: Schools, dorms, military barracks, child care centers and other crowded places have been associated with the spread of MRSA, although the infection can be spread anywhere.

Q: What can my child and I do to prevent him or her from getting MRSA?

A: Hand-washing may be your best defense. Tell your child to not share sports equipment, personal items or towels. Keep any open wounds clean and covered with a dry, clean bandage. You also may clean sports equipment with a disinfectant or bleach-water solution as an added precaution.



Michael D. Green, MD, MPH, has been a physician in the Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC since 1986. He also is a professor of pediatrics and surgery at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. Dr. Green has been awarded the Clinical Infectious Diseases Award for Outstanding Review, and he is actively involved in various research projects focused on the diagnosis and management of infectious diseases in children.



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