



Information Provided By:
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Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) Infection and the Workplace (For Employees)

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) infection

Earlier we received information that one of our employees may have or have been exposed to MRSA, a bacterial infection of the skin that is difficult to treat. Some individuals were concerned that the bacteria may be spread in the workplace which prompted us to contact Dr. Diana Yu, Thurston County Health Officer, to get more information. Dr. Yu provided the following information:

WHAT MRSA IS...

- MRSA is a type of *Staph aureus* bacteria. It can infect open cuts, sores or wounds in the skin. Symptoms of infections from MRSA may include boils, festering sores, or irritation of the infected area.
- MRSA is harder to treat because it is resistant to some antibiotics. Typically, infected individuals have to be treated by having the wound opened and drained or receive specific antibiotics by mouth. Severe infections may be treated intravenously (IV) or by injection (shots).
- *Staph aureus* is a common bacteria present on the skin and/or in the noses of healthy people and in our environment. It is estimated that one in ten people have the MRSA form of it. Occasionally it gets into the body through breaks in the skin (abrasions, cuts, wounds, surgical incisions) and cause infection.

WHAT MRSA IS NOT...

- MRSA is not a "flesh eating" bacteria.
- MRSA is not untreatable - it can be treated successfully.

PRECAUTIONS TO GUARD AGAINST MRSA INFECTION:

- Wash your hands! Remember, anyone can carry these bacteria and not know it! Just as hand washing protects you from the common cold and other contagious infections; it will safeguard you against MRSA as well.
- Remember that alcohol based hand sanitizer only works when used on visibly clean skin, so wash with soap and hot water as well as using hand sanitizer.
- Keep work areas clean. Periodically disinfect counter tops, shelves, equipment, and tools. Don't eat food in work areas.
- Stay home if you are sick. Bacteria transferred from runny noses and coughs to your hands can be spread to others.

If you have any questions or concerns, or feel that you have been infected with MRSA, contact your health care provider.