COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
University of Kentucky – College of Agriculture

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What you should know about Community-Associated MRSA: The "Superbug"

Cooperative Extension Service
(Your) County
Address
City, State & Zip
Phone: (000) 000-0000
www.ca.uky.edu/hes/?p=6

There are daily updates on new cases of MRSA in the news. The following information will provide some basic information on what MRSA is, signs and symptoms of MRSA, and how you can prevent contracting this disease.

What is CA-MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus, commonly known as ***"staph (pronounced staff)*** is a bacteria found on the skin and in the nose of healthy people. Approximately 25-30 percent of the general population are colonized (have the bacteria present, but not causing an infection) in their nose. This bacteria is the most common cause of skin infections (pimples and boils) in the United States . Generally, infections caused by the "***staph"*** bacteria are minor and will go away without treatment with antibiotics.

Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus or MRSA (pronounced Mursa) is a ***"staph"*** infection that is resistant to antibiotics belonging to the class of drugs called ***beta-lactams***. Beta-lactams include ***penicillin, oxacillin, and amoxicillin.*** Approximately one percent of the general population is colonized with this type of ***"staph".*** MRSA is most commonly found in hospitals, nursing homes, dialysis centers, or other health care facilities treating the ill or immune-compromised. Infections caused by this type of ***"staph"*** include urinary tract infections, wound infections, and pneumonia.

Community-Associated MRSA (CA-MRSA) is a form of ***MRSA***, the resistant ***"staph"*** infection found outside the health care setting and in the general population. Most recently this form of ***"staph"*** has been found in schools and day care facilities in several states in the U.S.

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What are the signs and symptoms of *CA-MRSA*?

Skin infections from ***CA-MRSA*** may look like any of the following:

- A spider bite
- A turf burn
- Abscess
- Boil
- Impetigo
- Infected skin wound

If you have any of the following please see your health care provider immediately. Only your health care provider can diagnose that you have CA-MRSA!!

How do you get *CA-MRSA*?

The disease is spread by the following:

- Touching someone's cut or wound who has been infected with ***CA-MRSA***.
- Touching surfaces such as desks, doorknobs, light switches, bathroom sinks, or sports equipment that have ***CA-MRSA*** on them.
- Sharing personal hygiene items such as soap, towels, or razors.
- Improper cleaning of commonly shared areas or equipment.
- Overuse of antibiotics, not finishing them (after you start feeling better),

How do you prevent or decrease the spread of *CA-MRSA*?

Steps to prevent or decrease the spread of ***CA-MRSA*** are:

- Wash your hands often with warm, soapy water.
- Use a 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water is not available.
- Shower immediately after participating in sports events.
- Do not share personal hygiene items.
- Wear sports practice clothes only once. Wash them with hot water and soap and dry in hot dryer.
- Cover all wounds with clean, dry bandage.
- Do not touch other people's wounds.
- Report skin infections immediately.
- Clean and disinfect all commonly shared surfaces and equipment.
- Do not participate in contact sports while diagnosed with ***CA-MRSA***.

For more information contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at

http://www.cdc.gov/nciod/drqp/ar_mrsa_ca.html

Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2007) Community Acquired MRSA. Available online at

http://www.cdc.gov/nciod/drqp/ar_mrsa_ca.html.

The December 2007 Adult Health Bulletin was prepared by: Peggy Riley RN, MSN, Extension Specialist for Nursing.

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