

## Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

### What is MRSA?

MRSA is a type of bacteria that is resistant to certain antibiotics. Although MRSA is primarily found in people, animals can also be infected.

### Is MRSA a health risk for myself or my family?

MRSA does not usually cause illness in healthy people or animals. If a person or animal has a compromised immune system due to old age, recent surgery, cancer etc. exposure to MRSA could threaten health.

### How is MRSA transmitted to people and animals?

Direct skin-to-skin contact is the most common way MRSA is transmitted, but it can also be transmitted by contaminated objects such as bandages.

### What are the symptoms of MRSA in people and animals?

MRSA most commonly causes skin infections or wound infections.

### Can a pet or person have MRSA and not be sick?

Yes, people and pets can carry MRSA on their skin or in their nose and have no outward signs of illness. This is called colonization.

### How is MRSA diagnosed?

A swab taken from the affected area is submitted to a laboratory for bacterial culture. If your pet is diagnosed with this bacterial infection, we recommend that you consult your physician for examination and recommendations.

### If my pet has an MRSA infection, what can I do to avoid getting infected?

1. **Follow all wound care instructions from your veterinarian.**

2. Avoid situations that allow for bacteria to be easily transferred, such as direct contact with affected wounds, nose-to-nose and mouth-to-mouth contact while your animal is contagious.
3. Practice good hand hygiene. You, your family, and others in close contact should wash hands frequently with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after changing the infected animal's bandage or touching an infected wound.
4. Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered when in contact with your pet. Wear disposable gloves when cleaning infected wounds and if possible, when touching items such as the animal's bedding, bandages or any other objects that may have been in contact with the infected wound.
5. Clean washable items that become soiled with hot water and laundry detergent (use bleach if possible). Drying laundry in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying, also helps kill bacteria.
6. Use a household disinfectant or bleach solution to clean any surfaces contaminated by wounds or drainage.
  - To make bleach solution mix 2 teaspoons bleach into one quart of water.
  - Be sure to make a new bleach solution every day.
  - Never mix bleach with other cleaners, especially ammonia.
7. If anyone in your home has recently had surgery or is immuno-compromised, he/she should avoid contact with the infected pet, the pet's wound and any contaminated items such as bandage materials.

#### For more information go to:

- **Minnesota Department of Health**  
[www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us)
- **Centers for Disease Control**  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

For clarification of information presented on this fact sheet, email [cahfs@umn.edu](mailto:cahfs@umn.edu).

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