



## Defending Against MRSA

Protecting yourself from the spread of communicable disease can seem daunting. However, there are some common-sense precautions can help reduce your risk:

**Wash your hands.** Careful hand washing remains your best defense against germs. Scrub hands briskly for at least 15 seconds, then dry them with a disposable towel and use another towel to turn off the faucet. Carry a small bottle of hand sanitizer containing at least 62 percent alcohol for times when you don't have access to soap and water.

**Keep personal items personal.** Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, sheets, razors, clothing and athletic equipment. MRSA spreads on contaminated objects as well as through direct contact.

**Keep wounds covered.** Keep cuts and abrasions clean and covered with sterile, dry bandages until they heal. The pus from infected sores may contain MRSA, and keeping wounds covered will help keep the bacteria from spreading.

**Shower after workouts.** Shower immediately after each game or practice. Use soap and water. Don't share towels.

**Take a break from the gym or pool if you have a concerning infection.** If you have a wound that's draining or appears infected — for example is red, swollen, warm to the touch or tender — consider sitting out athletic games or practices until the wound has healed.

**Sanitize linens.** If you have a cut or sore, wash towels and bed linens in a washing machine set to the "hot" water setting (with added bleach, if possible) and dry them in a hot dryer. Wash gym and athletic clothes after each wearing.

**Get tested.** If you have a skin infection that requires treatment, ask your doctor if you should be tested for MRSA. Doctors may prescribe drugs that aren't effective against antibiotic-resistant staph, which delays treatment and creates more resistant germs. Testing specifically for MRSA may get you the specific antibiotic you need to effectively treat your infection.

**How is MRSA Spread?** Most MRSA is spread through skin-to-skin contact or through shared items such as towels, razors and bandages. It's possible that surfaces — such as a bus seat or exercise equipment — may be contaminated for hours to days, but infection is not a likely result.

**Can MRSA Be Spread In Pools?** There have been no outbreaks or documented transmission of Staph/MRSA associated with public swimming pools. Proper chlorination and appropriate pool maintenance should be adequate to kill Staph. Persons with active, draining skin lesions of any kind should refrain from using public swimming pools, hot tubs, or whirlpools, since they would be unable to keep the lesions covered and therefore could pose a risk of transmission to others through direct skin contact.

Information in this document was obtained from the US Centers for Disease Control ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)).