

Preventing Community Acquired MRSA

CA MRSA is most frequently spread from person to person by direct skin -to-skin contact with an infected person. Since MRSA is located on the hands and skin, found in infected wounds and body fluids, they are important factors in how MRSA infections are spread. Although it is less likely, MRSA may be spread indirectly by contaminated items and surfaces.

One of the most important ways to protect against infections with CA MRSA is to keep skin intact. Using protective gloves and clothing when performing activities likely to cause punctures, scratches, cuts, abrasions, or other injuries to the skin will help prevent CA MRSA from causing skin and soft tissue infections. If injury to the skin does occur, the wound should be cleaned immediately with soap and warm water, dried, and then covered with a clean, dry bandage or dressing.

Other ways to prevent transmission of MRSA are hand washing, containing wound drainage and infected body fluids (e.g., blood, saliva, or mucous), and cleaning and disinfecting contaminated items and surfaces.

Below are additional steps to help reduce the spread of CA MRSA in the community.

In Gymnasiums, health clubs, and spas:

1. Wash hands when entering and before leaving the building. Alcohol gel may be used as an effective and convenient alternative to soap and water. If hands are visibly dirty, however, soap and water should be used.
2. Facilities should provide liquid soap dispensers instead of bar soaps for hand washing.
3. Use air blowers or disposable paper towels to dry hands rather than shared cloth towels.
4. Visitors should consider using clothing with long sleeves and long pants to protect skin from abrasions, cuts, and sores during activities that are likely to cause skin damage.
5. Any cuts or open sores should be covered with clean, dry dressings or bandages before using gymnasiums and health clubs.
6. Persons with cuts, draining sore or wounds should not participate in activities that may contaminate surfaces and equipment.
7. Personal items such as towels, clothing, bar soap, razors, or clippers should not be shared.
8. Shower at the end of activities.
9. Use a towel or wear clothing that acts as a barrier between skin and exercise equipment such as exercise machines and massage tables.
10. Wipe surfaces of equipment before and after use—facilities such as health clubs can encourage visitors to clean equipment surfaces by providing spray bottles of disinfectant and paper towels near each piece of equipment.
11. Used linens and clothing such as sheets, blankets, and towels should be washed in detergent and hot water (about 120° F) for at least 25 minutes. If lower washing temperatures are used, oxygenated laundry detergents formulated for low temperature washing should be used. Use an automatic dryer on hot temperature (180°F) to dry items—do not air dry. Items should be used only after they are completely dry.

For Sports Teams:

The following measures may help prevent CA MRSA infections among participants in contact sports such as football, wrestling, hockey, basketball, etc.

1. Team members should wash hands when entering and leaving locker rooms, weight rooms and other common sports activity rooms. Also wash hands before practice or competition. Alcohol hand sanitizers may be used instead of soap and water if hands are not visibly dirty.
2. Cover any open wounds or sores before participating in sports activities. Make sure bandages and dressings stay in place during activities.
3. Consider excluding players with potentially infectious skin cuts from sports activities until wounds are healed or can be adequately covered.
4. Athletes are encouraged to shower with soap and warm water after practice and competition. If there are active infections of MRSA among team members, consider implementing antibacterial soap for showering.
5. Locker rooms should have adequate sinks, showers, and soap supplies to encourage good personal hygiene.
6. Athletes should not share personal items such as towels and razors.
7. Uniforms and equipment should be routinely cleaned after each use. Items that can be laundered should be washed in detergent and hot water (about 120° F) for at least 25 minutes. If lower washing temperatures are used, oxygenated laundry detergents made for low temperature washing should be used. Use an automatic dryer on hot temperature (180°F) for items that can withstand those temperatures. Items should be used only after they are completely dry.
8. Maintain clean locker rooms and shower areas with regularly scheduled cleaning.
9. Athletes, trainers, and coaches should be trained to watch for wounds and skin cuts among team members, and to recommend medical care if cuts appear infected.

Schools and Work Settings

1. Schools and workplaces should encourage regular hand washing. Hand washing supplies include liquid soap dispensers rather than soap bars, and paper towels for single use instead of multiple use cloth towels. Alcohol hand sanitizers are a convenient alternative to soap and water, when hands are not visibly soiled.
2. Wash your hands after using rest rooms, before eating or drinking, after using tissue to cover sneezes or coughs, before and after using exercise and sports activity areas.
3. Cover open wounds or sores when possible with bandages or dressings.
4. Anyone with an uncovered draining wound or other infected body fluids (e.g. blood, saliva, or mucous) should be kept home from school or work until wound drainage or body fluids are controlled.
5. Any item or surface that comes in contact with blood, other body fluids, or wound drainage should be cleaned immediately.
6. Common areas in school and workplace settings (e.g. cafeterias, rest rooms, locker rooms, common work stations) should be cleaned regularly.