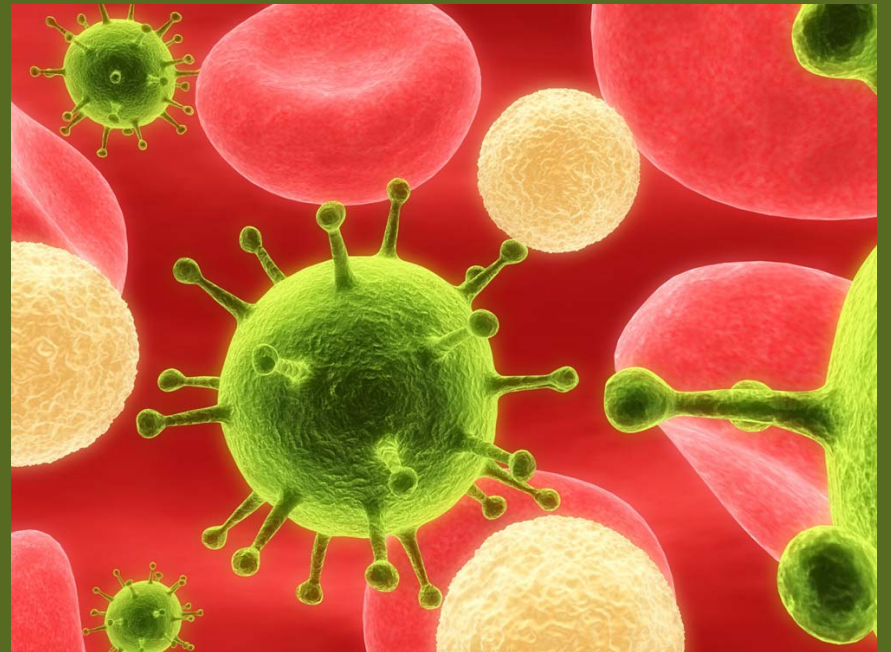


# **MRSA** **(Methicillin Resistant** ***Staphylococcus aureus*)** **and You**

## **A Guide for You and Your Family**



# Central Health



## What is MRSA?

MRSA is a kind of staph germ (*Staphylococcus aureus*). Staph germs live on the skin and in the nose and do not usually cause any harm. When the skin is opened by cuts or scrapes these staph germs can enter and cause infections. When common medications like antibiotics do not kill the staph germs, it means the germs have become resistant to those medicines. This type of staph germ is called MRSA (**M**ethicillin **R**esistant ***S**ta**ph**yl**o**cc**o**cc**u**s *aureus*).*

## What does MRSA look like?

MRSA germs can be found on the skin, in the nose, wounds, blood, urine and any other part of the body. MRSA most often causes skin infections. These skin infections may look like:

- Large, red, painful bumps under the skin (called boils or abscesses).
- A cut that is swollen, hot and filled with pus.
- Blisters filled with pus.
- Sores that look and feel like insect bites (MRSA is not caused by insect bites).

## How did I get MRSA?

Anyone can get MRSA. You can get MRSA by touching someone or something that has the germ on it and then touching your skin or your nose. People who have been in hospital, rehab facilities, or nursing homes are more at risk of having these germs.

There are two ways you can get MRSA.

- **You can have an infection**

When you have an infection you might have signs like a boil, sore or cut that is red swollen or filled with pus. You will need treatment.

- **You can carry the MRSA germ without signs of infection**

If you are a carrier you do not have signs of infection. The MRSA germ is still living on your body and you can spread MRSA to others. Your nurse or doctor may tell you that you are colonized. Carrier and colonized are the same. You may not need treatment.

## For more Information:

This booklet has been prepared by Central Health's Infection Prevention & Control Department. If you have questions about MRSA contact your doctor, local Health Protection branch or call Infection Prevention & Control at one of the following contact numbers:

Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre: (709) 292-2500 or  
James Paton Memorial Regional Health Centre: (709) 256-2500

You can also find more information about MRSA on the following websites:

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi/mrsa-eng.php>

<http://www.dobugsneeddrugs.org/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/MRSA>

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar\\_mrsa\\_ca.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_ca.html)

- If you have open wounds that cannot be covered with a bandage you should not play until the wound can be covered and contained or has dried.
- Avoid public gyms, saunas, hot tubs or pools until sores on the skin are healed.

### **How do I stop from spreading MRSA to others?**

If you have MRSA germs the chance of spreading them to your family and other people is very small. Washing your hands often is the most important thing you can do.

#### **If MRSA germs are on your skin....**

If you are a carrier of the MRSA germs, it is important to wash your hands after you touch the area on your body where MRSA germs were found. Keep all open wounds covered with a bandage. Change the bandage if it gets wet and wash your hands.

#### **If MRSA germs are in your lungs....**

Cover your mouth when you cough and wash your hands.

#### **If MRSA germs are in your urine (pee)...**

Clean your bathroom well and wash your hands after using the bathroom.

#### **And remember:**

- Wash your hands.
- Take care of yourself by eating right, being active, do not smoke.
- Take care of your skin.
- Keep skin infections covered to stop the spread of MRSA germs to others.
- Always tell your doctor, nurse, or other healthcare provider that you have MRSA. This will help stop the spread to others.

### **What is Central Health doing about MRSA germs?**

We look for these germs by asking all patients about their contact with other health care facilities. If you have been treated in another health care facility within the last 12 months, swabs will be taken using a special Q-tip swab to look for these MRSA germs. This is based on Canadian guidelines and many hospitals follow these guidelines.

### **What happens if I have MRSA germs?**

When seeing a health care provider you should tell them you have MRSA. Staff will wash their hands and wear gloves and gowns when caring for you. This is to stop the germs from being passed to other patients. If you are admitted to the hospital, visitors may be asked to wear gloves and gowns. You will likely be placed in a private room and a sign on your door will tell others to gown and glove when entering.

If you live in a nursing home, staff will wash their hands and wear gloves and gowns when caring for you. You may or may not be placed in a private room and you will not be separated from others. You can be a part of facility activities and events. A sign on your door will tell others to wash their hands.

### **Will I always have MRSA germs?**

Only some people can be treated with medicines (antibiotics) to get rid of the MRSA germs. However most people who are treated will still carry the germs in their nose or on their skin for months or years, even though it does not make them sick. People with poor health (chronic illnesses), open wounds, and the elderly are more likely to be colonized.

### **Ways to protect yourself and others:**

The most important thing you can do is wash your hands:

- Before and after touching genitals, nose, mouth, open areas on the skin such as cuts, boils and pimples or rubbing your eyes.
- After touching body fluids or things soiled with body fluids such as urine.
- After blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing or using the bathroom.
- Before preparing food, eating or drinking.

**The most important thing you can do to stop the spread of infection for you and your family is to wash your hands!**



**Use soap and water**

**OR**

**Use waterless hand rub**



When you see that your hands are dirty you must use clean them. There are two options for washing your hands. The following diagrams illustrate how to use soap and water and waterless hand rub to wash your hands.

## **Athletes and sport**

- Do not share personal things like razors, towels or clothing (including uniforms).
- Take a shower after every practice or game.
- Clean common areas used by team members such as bathrooms after use.
- Wash equipment and clothing after each use.



## Day-care centers and schools

- Keep sores on the skin covered, clean and dry. When pus or fluid on the skin cannot be covered or contained you may need to stop activities such as work, school or contact sports for a short time.
- In most cases schools do not have to close or know when students have MRSA germs.
- MRSA germs are common causes of skin sores. Remember staph germs, including MRSA, can be normally found on the skin of many people.
- Do not share personal things like towels or clothing.
- Wash your hands often.



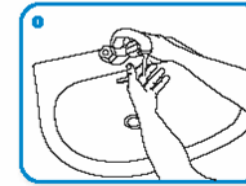
## How to wash your hands - Option 1: Soap and water

# How to handwash?

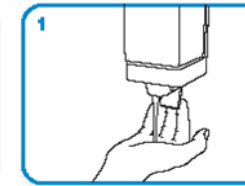
WASH HANDS ONLY WHEN VISIBLY SOILED! OTHERWISE, USE HANDRUB!



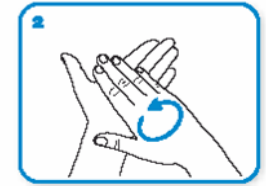
Duration of the entire procedure: 40-60 sec.



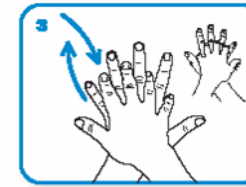
Wet hands with water



apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces.



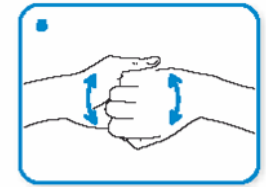
Rub hands palm to palm,



right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa,



palm to palm with fingers interlaced,



backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked,



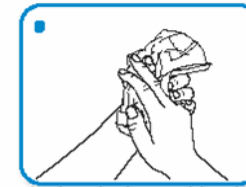
rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa,



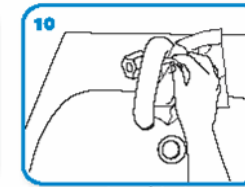
rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa.



Rinse hands with water,



dry hands thoroughly with a single use towel,



use towel to turn off faucet.



Your hands are now safe.



ARRÊT!  
lavez vos mains

WHO acknowledges the Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève (HUG), in particular the members of the Infection Control Programme, for their active participation in developing this material.

October 2006, version 1.

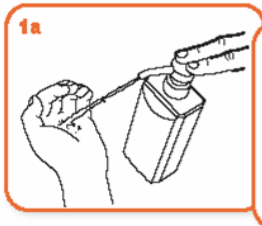


**Option 2: Waterless hand rub, you do not need water**

# How to handrub?

**RUB HANDS FOR HAND HYGIENE! WASH HANDS ONLY WHEN VISIBLY SOILED!**

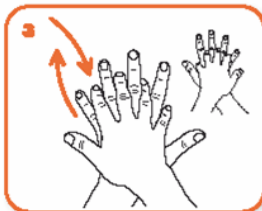
 Duration of the entire procedure: **20-30 sec.**



Apply a palmful of the product in a cupped hand, covering all surfaces.



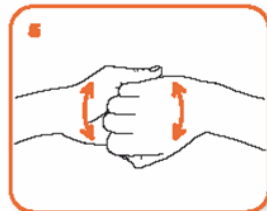
Rub hands palm to palm,



right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa,



palm to palm with fingers interlaced,



backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked,



rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa,



rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa.



Once dry, your hands are safe.



**ARRÊT!**  
Lavez vos mains

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**WORLD ALLIANCE**  
for **PATIENT SAFETY**



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## In Your Community

### Your home

Keep your home clean. Clean areas that you and others touch often such as door handles, countertops, light switches, phones, tubs, showers and sink taps with a cleaner. Standard cleaning products you buy at local stores are fine for cleaning your home, washing clothing and dishes. Dishes used by family members can be washed together and do not need to be separated.



Do not share items that touch your skin such as razors, toothbrushes and bath towels. Pets and animals can carry MRSA and other germs. After touching pets and animals wash hands.

Change your clothing every day and wash them before wearing them again. Clothing and bed sheets may be washed in the same way as the rest of the family. Use the hottest water possible to clean clothing and bed sheets. Dry in a warm or hot dryer. Make sure clothes are dry.

