



General Information About MRSA in Healthcare Settings



Staphylococcus aureus, a type of staph bacteria that is resistant to many antibiotics. In a healthcare setting, such as a hospital or nursing home, MRSA can cause skin infections, pneumonia and surgical site infections.

How Does MRSA Spread in Healthcare Settings? (#q1)
What is the Cause of an Infection? (#q2)

(#q4)

MRSA Spread in Healthcare

In a healthcare setting, such as a hospital or nursing home, MRSA is usually spread by direct contact with an infected wound or from contaminated hands, usually those of healthcare providers. Also, people who carry MRSA but do not have signs of infection can spread the bacteria to others and potentially cause an infection.

How Does Someone Know if MRSA is the Cause of an Infection?

The only way to know if MRSA is the cause of an infection is to perform a laboratory culture of the bacteria. Obtaining bacteria to culture is a procedure done by a doctor.

How Common is MRSA?

CDC is engaged in several short- and long-term surveillance (infection tracking) projects that involve collaboration with health departments, individual hospital, and academic medical centers, among others. Understanding the burden of MRSA – how much is occurring, where it is happening, and how it is being spread – is essential for developing effective prevention programs and measuring their impact. For more information about how CDC tracks MRSA infections, [visit this page \(/mrsa/tracking/index.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/tracking/index.html).

Studies show that about one in three (33%) people carry staph in their nose, usually without any illness. Two in 100 people carry MRSA. There are not data showing the total number of people who get MRSA skin infections in the community.

Although MRSA is still a major patient threat, a CDC [study](http://archinte.jamanetwork.com/journal.aspx) (<http://archinte.jamanetwork.com/journal.aspx>) [CDC](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>) published in the Journal of the American Medical Association Internal Medicine showed that invasive (life-threatening) MRSA infections in healthcare settings are declining. Invasive MRSA infections that began in hospitals declined 54% between 2005 and 2011, with 30,800 fewer severe MRSA infections. In addition, the study showed 9,000 fewer deaths in hospital patients in 2005 versus 2011.

This study (or report) complements data from the [National Healthcare Safety Network \(NHSN\)](http://www.nhsn.gov) ([/nhsn/](http://www.nhsn.gov)) that found rates of MRSA bloodstream infections occurring in hospitalized patients fell nearly 50% from 1997 to 2007.

Taken together and with other reports such as the [March 2011 CDC Vital Signs article](http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns) [\[PDF - 2.75 MB\]](http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns) ([/vitalsigns/pdf/2011-03-vitalsigns.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/pdf/2011-03-vitalsigns.pdf)), and a 2013 study showing a decrease in overall central line-associated bloodstream infections, these studies provide evidence that rates of hospital-onset, severe MRSA infections in the United States are falling. While MRSA remains an important public health problem and more remains to be done to further decrease risks of developing these infections, this decrease in healthcare-associated MRSA infections is encouraging.

For more information about CDC surveillance programs and reports related to MRSA, visit:

- [CDC MRSA website](http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/) ([/mrsa/](http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/))
- [CDC Active Bacterial Core Surveillance](http://www.cdc.gov/abcs/reports-findings/survreports/mrsa11.html) ([/abcs/reports-findings/survreports/mrsa11.html](http://www.cdc.gov/abcs/reports-findings/survreports/mrsa11.html))
- [CDC Vital Signs Report](http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns) [\[PDF - 2.75 MB\]](http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns) ([/vitalsigns/pdf/2011-03-vitalsigns.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/pdf/2011-03-vitalsigns.pdf))
- [National Healthcare Safety Network](http://www.nhsn.gov) ([/nhsn/](http://www.nhsn.gov))
- [NHSN Annual Reports](http://www.nhsn.gov/dataStat.html) ([/nhsn/dataStat.html](http://www.nhsn.gov/dataStat.html))
- [CDC Safe Healthcare Blog](http://blogs.cdc.gov/safehealthcare/category/mrsa/) (<http://blogs.cdc.gov/safehealthcare/category/mrsa/>)
- [CDC Funding to Prevent HAIs including MRSA](http://www.cdc.gov/hai/state-based/prevention-projects.html) ([/hai/state-based/prevention-projects.html](http://www.cdc.gov/hai/state-based/prevention-projects.html))

To see how states are working to prevent HAIs including MRSA, view this [interactive map of state-based prevention activities](http://www.cdc.gov/hai/stateplans/HAIstatePlans-map.html) ([/HAI/stateplans/HAIstatePlans-map.html](http://www.cdc.gov/hai/stateplans/HAIstatePlans-map.html)).

For information about how to protect yourself and your loved ones from MRSA, visit the [MRSA patient page](http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/healthcare/patient/index.html) ([/mrsa/healthcare/patient/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/healthcare/patient/index.html)).

Can MRSA Infections be Prevented?

Yes. Numerous studies and reports show that when healthcare providers follow CDC guidelines, MRSA infections can largely – if not completely – be prevented. These guidelines include a range of activities that healthcare facilities can employ to reduce or eliminate MRSA infections.

Click [here](http://blogs.cdc.gov/safehealthcare/?cat=108) (<http://blogs.cdc.gov/safehealthcare/?cat=108>) to see a series of CDC Safe Healthcare Blog entries about MRSA prevention topics, including recently published articles.

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