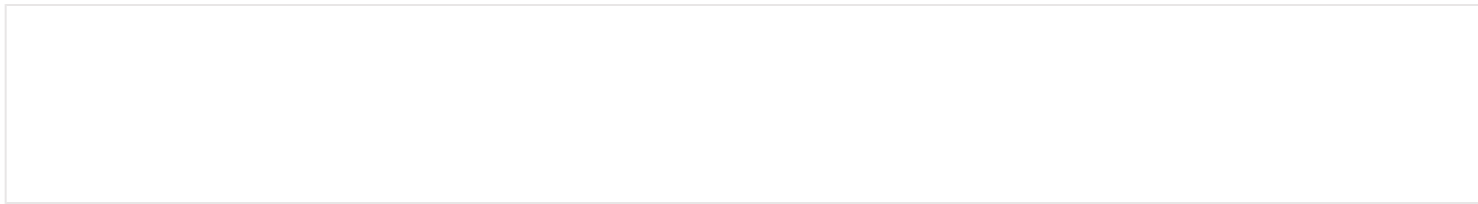




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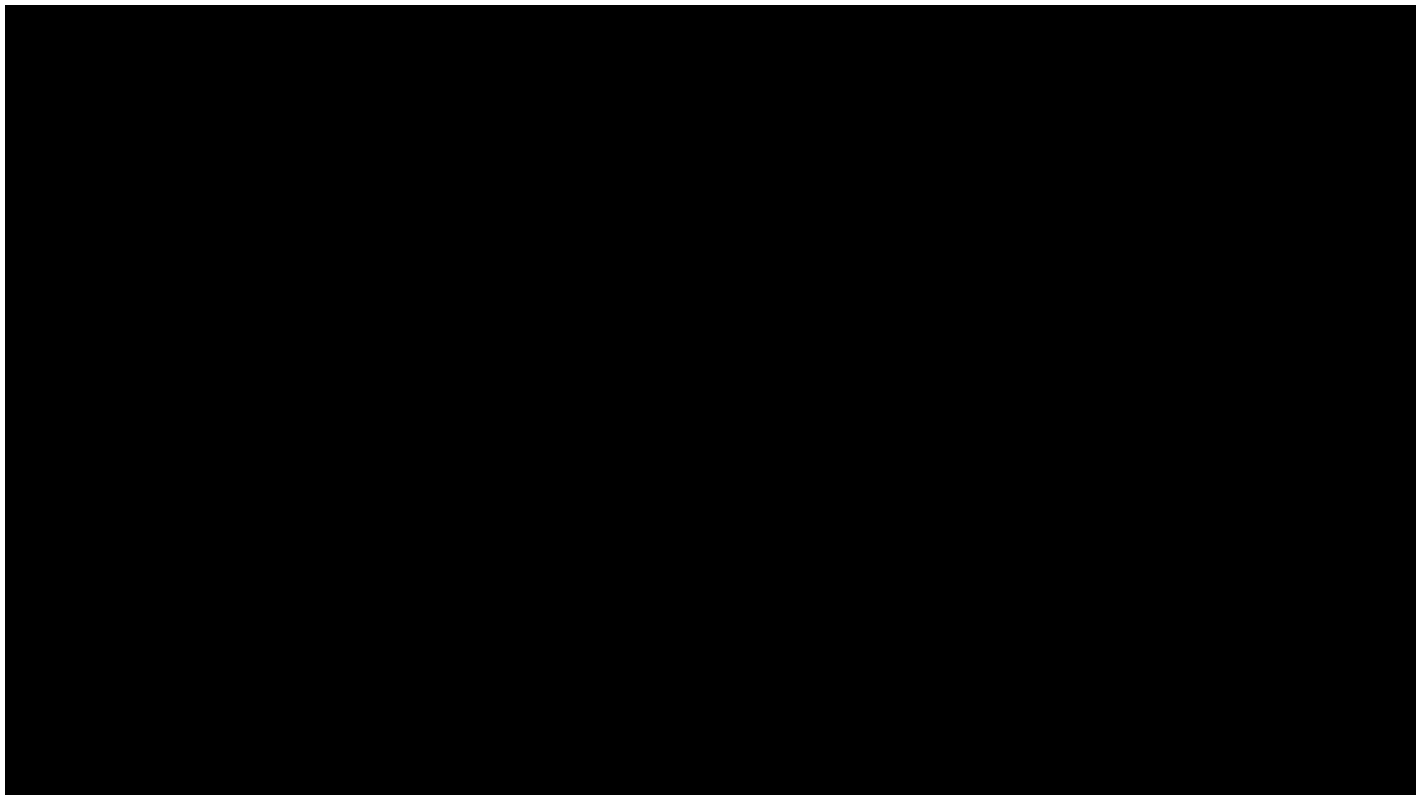
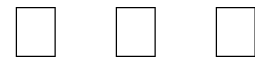
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Understanding MRSA Infection -- the Basics



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Understanding MRSA Infection -- the Basics

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT

IN THIS ARTICLE

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What Is MRSA?

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus ([MRSA](#)) is a bacterium that causes infections in different parts of the body. It's tougher to treat than most strains of staphylococcus aureus -- or [staph](#) -- because it's resistant to some commonly used [antibiotics](#).

The symptoms of MRSA depend on where you're infected. Most often, it causes mild infections on the [skin](#), like sores or boils. But it can also cause more serious skin infections or infect surgical wounds, the bloodstream, the [lungs](#), or the urinary tract.

Though most MRSA infections aren't serious, some can be life-threatening. Many public health experts are alarmed by the spread of tough strains of MRSA. Because it's hard to treat, MRSA is sometimes called a "super bug."

What Causes MRSA?

Garden-variety staph are common bacteria that can live in our bodies. Plenty of healthy people carry staph without being infected by it. In fact, one third of everybody has staph bacteria in their noses.

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But staph can be a problem if it manages to get into the body, often through a cut. Once there, it can cause an infection. Staph is one of the most common causes of skin infections in the U.S. Usually, these are minor and don't need special treatment. Less often, staph can cause serious problems like infected wounds or [pneumonia](#).

Staph can usually be treated with [antibiotics](#). But over the decades, some strains of staph -- like MRSA -- have become resistant to antibiotics that once destroyed it. MRSA was first discovered in 1961. It's now resistant to methicillin, [amoxicillin](#), [penicillin](#), [oxacillin](#), and many other common antibiotics.

While some antibiotics still work, MRSA is constantly adapting. Researchers developing new antibiotics are having a tough time keeping up.

Who Gets MRSA?

MRSA is spread by contact. So, you could get MRSA by touching another person who has it on the skin. Or you could get it by touching objects that have the bacteria on them. MRSA is carried by about 2% of the population (or 2 in 100 people), although most of them aren't infected.

MRSA infections are common among people who have weak immune systems and are in hospitals, nursing homes, and other [health care](#) centers. Infections can appear around surgical wounds or invasive devices, like catheters or implanted feeding tubes.

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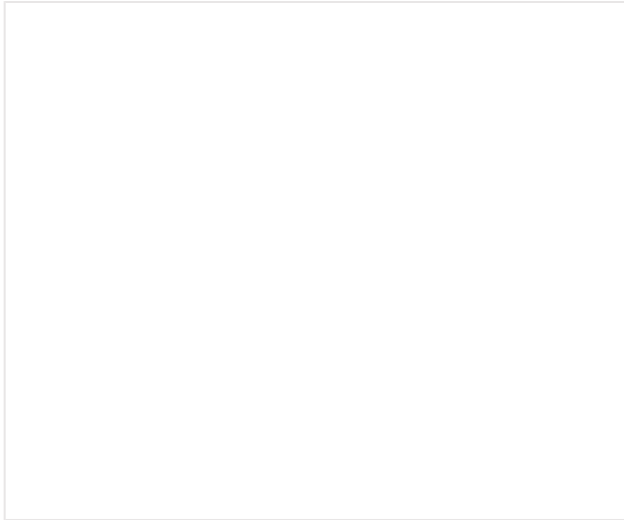
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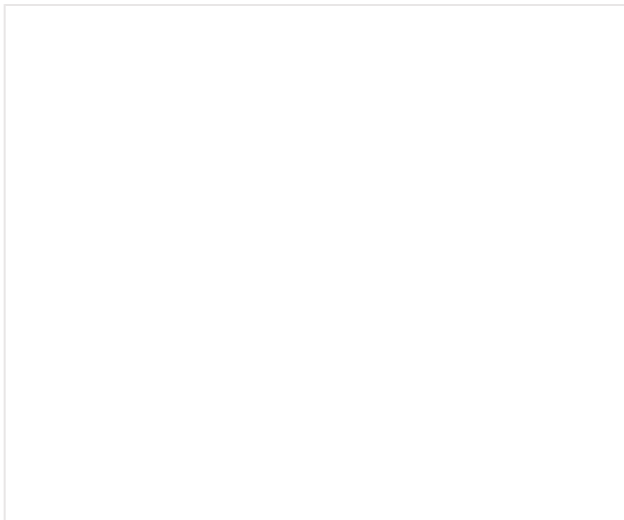
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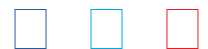
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