

MRSA: What is it?

You may have heard about MRSA on the news, from your child's school or from people you know. So what is MRSA (Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)?

It is a type of skin infection that is caused by bacteria (a germ). This bacteria is resistant to certain antibiotics—that means only some medicines will kill this type of germ.

If someone gets a skin infection caused by MRSA, they may have a wound on the skin. It may be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or draining fluid. It may look like an insect or spider bite.

MRSA is spread from a person with an infection by:

1. Direct contact with infected skin.
2. Sharing contaminated sports equipment.
3. Sharing personal items (bar soap, deodorant, towels, razors).



MRSA skin infection

If you think you have a MRSA skin infection, seek

medical care. Only a doctor or healthcare worker can tell if you have MRSA. To treat the infection, the doctor may drain the wound, give you an antibiotic, or tell you how to care for the wound.

Protect yourself from MRSA and other germs by doing these things:

- Wash your hands often with warm, soapy water.
- Use an alcohol-based hand gel when soap and water are not on hand.
- Do not share personal items (like bar soap, deodorant, towels, razors) or clothing.
- If you have a cut, scrape or a scratch, keep it clean, dry and covered. Tape your bandage on all four sides.
- Do not take antibiotics when you do not need them.
- If a doctor tells you to take antibiotics, be sure to take all of the medicine.



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Remember:

- ◆ *Only a doctor or healthcare worker can tell you if you have MRSA.*
- ◆ *Protect yourself: Wash your hands often.*
- ◆ *Don't spread germs by sharing personal items (like bar soap, deodorant, towels, razors).*

Stay in touch with the Health Bulletin

It can be hard to stay up-to-date with health information. To help you, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health will send health tips and news to community leaders and groups. We know how important you are to getting out health messages to the people who need them most.

The newsletter will come out four times per year. It will include important tips and

things we all need to know to stay healthy.

If there is a disease outbreak in Philadelphia, we will send a special issue of the Health Bulletin.

If you would like the Health Bulletin sent to you, call or e-mail Ms. Deborah Knorr at 215-685-6459 or deborah.knorr@phila.gov.



Resolve to be ready

This year, many Americans will make at least one New Year's resolution. Today, PDPH is encouraging you to make a resolution that is important and easy to do: preparing for emergencies.

To learn more, visit www.phila.gov/health or call 1-877-READY-11.

For a happy and safe New Year remember: Don't wait. Set a date. Resolve to be ready in 2008.

Don't get the flu: stay healthy this season

This season, many people will get sick with the flu. It is important to know how to avoid it and keep from getting sick.

What exactly is the flu and how is it different from a



common cold? The flu is a respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that can spread from person

to person. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death.

Signs of flu include a fever (usually high), headache,

The single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get the flu shot every year.

extreme tiredness, dry cough, and muscle aches. There also are flu antiviral drugs that can be used to treat and prevent the flu.

A cold is different from the flu. With a cold, it is rare to get a fever. It is more common that symptoms will start slowly, including a sore throat, sneezing and a stuffy nose.

The single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get the flu shot each year.

(For a flu clinic location, call 215-685-6458.) To keep from getting and spreading the flu, follow these tips also:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home from work and school when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

