

**Patient Information:**

**Information for Dealing With Staph or MRSA  
Skin Infections**

- ◆ About Skin Infections
- ◆ Self-Care
- ◆ When To See Your HCP
- ◆ Dealing with Staph or MRSA

**ABOUT SKIN INFECTIONS<sup>1</sup>**

Skin Infections start when bacteria get into a cut or scrape. Even ones you can't see (i.e. shaving and through eczema, psoriasis and acne conditions). Bacteria live on everyone's skin and usually cause no harm. But when staphylococcus bacteria get into your body through a break in the skin, they can cause a "staph" infection. Staph infections may spread to other people by skin-to-skin contact and from shared items such as towels, soap clothes and sports equipment. Also, beware of bedding with wound drainage on it.

Staph infections are becoming harder to treat. Some germs are "resistant" to antibiotics. They are called MRSA (methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus)

**THE BEST WAY TO PREVENT INFECTIONS IS SIMPLE — WASH YOUR HANDS.**  
Washing your hands often with soap and warm water also helps to prevent colds & flu. Antibacterial soaps are not needed.<sup>1</sup>

**Surprising Fact**



a yellow crust. It can be spread by scratching. This infection often occurs on the face.<sup>2</sup>

**Infected hair roots (follicles)**—small bumps under the skin at the base of the hair. They may itch.<sup>1</sup>

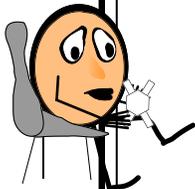
**WHEN TO SEE YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER:**

You have signs of infection such as pain, redness, swelling and heat, and oozing pus or blood<sup>1</sup> or other drainage.

New symptoms develop during or after you get treated.<sup>1</sup>

**Immediate Self-Care:**

- Wash cuts, scrapes and sores with soap and water; then keep them clean and cover them with bandages (changed 1-3 times per day).<sup>2</sup>
- Consult Schiffert Health Center's Wound Care Information Sheet located at <http://www.healthcenter.vt.edu/pdf/WoundCare.pdf> and then call us to make an appointment.
- Avoid contact with other people's cuts or sores and any materials that have come in contact with them.<sup>1</sup>
- Avoid sharing personal items such as soap, towels, razors and sports equipment.<sup>1</sup>
- Clean and wash sports clothing and equipment after each use.<sup>1</sup>



**DEALING WITH STAPH OR MRSA SKIN INFECTIONS:**

- DO NOT squeeze or try to pop bumps or pimples.
  - WASH YOUR HANDS before and after handling dressings or wound site, even if you wear gloves.
  - DO NOT use hot tubs, swimming pools or take a soaking bath until wounds are healed. Warm (not hot) showers are okay. DO NOT use loofas, sponges, or body poufs for bathing. Avoid harsh soaps like Dial® and Irish Spring® and don't bathe with bar soaps. (Bar soaps can harbor bacteria)
- Cleanse the wound areas as directed with a cleanser like HIBICLENS® skin cleanser\* daily until wounds are healed. To prevent skin drying, use moisturizers that are chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG) compatible such as Aveeno®, Lubriderm®, Eucerine®, or Cetaphil®. During these times you can use cleanser around the wound areas if you body's skin becomes too dry or irritated.
- Use paper towels to dry the wound site(s) after bathing to avoid spreading the infection through wound contact with your bath towel.
- NO SHAVING until wound(s) is healed. You may use a depilatory (ex: Nair®). **THROW AWAY** your old razor! Use only disposable razors for parts of body you can shave until wounds are completely healed.

**Some common skin infections caused by staph are<sup>1</sup>:**

- Boils**—tender, red lumps that swell and get white heads like very big pimples. Boils form on oily or moist skin such as the neck, armpits, groin and buttocks. They may break open and ooze pus or blood.<sup>1</sup>
- Impetigo**—blisters with fluid in them, which pop and get

# Information for Dealing With Staph or MRSA Skin Infections

- ☑ If wounds are located on the face, eyelids, etc., **THROW AWAY** appropriate facial make-up. (Remember...make-up should not be used when wounds are located in facial areas.)
- ☑ DO NOT SHARE with other people: lotions, towels, clothes, razors, make-up, soaps and/or sports equipment that you used while you had wound(s). Again, **THROW** disposable items away. Ask your practitioner or your wound care nurse for further information.
- ☑ SKIN TO SKIN CONTACT (including contact sports and/or sexual activity) can spread the skin infection. Even with the wound covered by a dressing there is still risk of spreading the infection — **SO DISCUSS** your risks with your practitioner or wound care nurse.
- ☑ The bacteria may be concentrated up in your nose so **USE PROPER RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE** (disposable tissues; sneeze into your sleeve; alcohol gel hand sanitizer to clean hands). **KEEP your hands** away from your face.
- ☑ To help prevent recurrences of this type of infection, avoid taking very hot tub baths or showers. Use a mild moisturizing liquid body wash such as Camay® or Dove® soap (or generic) in liquid form (prevents removal of the protective acid mantle on the skin which protects against microbes). Throw away any bar soap.
- ☑ **FINISH ALL ANTIBIOTICS THE PRACTITIONER ORDERS FOR YOU** — the last few pills kill the toughest germs.
- ☑ Care recommendations may vary based on the individual, number of wounds and where the wounds are located on the body.

**WASH YOUR HANDS  
BEFORE  
AND  
AFTER  
TOUCHING YOUR  
EYES, NOSE,  
MOUTH  
OR FACE!**

**Helpful  
Prevention  
Activity**



\*HIBICLENS® is an antimicrobial/antiseptic skin cleanser for topical administration. The active ingredient, chlorhexidine gluconate solution 4.0% w/v, kills germs on contact and bonds with the skin to keep killing microorganisms even after washing. The inactive ingredients include fragrance, gluconolactone, isopropyl alcohol 4% w/v, lauramine oxide, poloxamer 237, purified water, and red 40.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Washington State Department of Health DOH Pub 130-046 reprinted with permission.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Adapted from Washington State Department of Health DOH Pub 130-046 with permission.