



What is the scoop on MRSA and How can I protect myself?

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The newspapers have been filled lately with stories about MRSA and college populations. MRSA stands for "methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus". It is a bacterium that can cause infections ranging from minor skin infections (pimple-like red bumps or boils) to serious infections such as pneumonia. MRSA usually spreads from person to person through hands and close skin-to-skin contact. Drainage from infected wounds can spread MRSA to other parts of the body or other people. Unfortunately, MRSA is a hearty bacteria and can survive on some surfaces for prolonged times. Recently, several athletes at a state university caught mild cases of MRSA from improperly cleaned wrestling mats. For the average healthy college student, the most likely risk factors for getting MRSA are close skin-to-skin contact with an infected person, touching contaminated surfaces, crowded living conditions, inadequate personal hygiene and openings in the skin such as cuts or abrasions.

MRSA is not always treated with antibiotics. Sometimes, a wound only need be opened, drained, carefully cleaned and covered in order to prevent the spreading of the infection. Please be sure to visit Health Services (222-1441) to have any wounds inspected if there is concern of MRSA. If antibiotics are needed, the infection is cultured to determine which is the most efficient one to use. It is very important to complete the entire prescription if given one in order to kill MRSA. In stubborn MSRA cases, repeat prescriptions are needed.

As with any infectious situation, there are some precautions one can take. First and most importantly is personal hygiene. Wash hands often with soap and water and DON'T share personal items such as towels, bar soap or razors. Seek help at Health Services at the first signs of skin infection such as redness, swelling, pain, or draining pus. Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages. Clean and disinfect high-touch or soiled surfaces (door knobs/phones) frequently. Use products such as diluted bleach, Lysol, or Pine-Sol for cleaning. One doesn't need to turn into "Monk" but common sense is recommended! Let's keep Cornerstone University a cleaner place to learn!