

I think I have a skin infection

Doctor word: MRSA or Staph

How did I get this? Bacteria known as staphylococcus or “staph” can find their way into your body thru small breaks, cuts, or scrapes in the skin. Staph can spread from contact with other people who carry staph on their skin or from sheets, linens, soap, clothes and other shared items. Our skin is a protective barrier from bacteria which live on everyone.

Are staph infections easy to treat? NO. New staph, which are now harder to kill, are common due to the overuse of antibiotics. MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) are resistant to all penicillin-type antibiotics. These MRSA infections can affect skin, heart, blood, bone, and even cause death. MRSA infections are more common in healthcare settings, but are becoming more and more common in the community.

How do I recognize staph skin infections?

There are several types including:

Boils can appear as painful red lumps just under the skin that may eventually burst with pus and blood like a large pimple.

Impetigo occurs often on children’s faces with fluid-filled blisters popped and spread by scratching.

Folliculitis is infection of hair roots causing bumpy lesions and itching.

Any questions of skin infections should be brought to your healthcare provider in order to prevent possible spread.

Can I prevent skin infections? YES. The best way is to *wash your hands* with soap and water and any wounds. Keep wounds clean, dry, and covered until healed completely. Avoid contact with others and their belongings if they have cuts or wounds. Wash shared items (towels, equipment, etc.) frequently.

Always Wash Your Hands!!

Can I help prevent development of “resistant” bacteria? YES. Never take antibiotics if not prescribed by a doctor. This could lead to creating resistant bacteria like MRSA. Always finish antibiotics and never save antibiotics. The resistant bacteria are killed by the final pills.

When should I see my doctor? If you have redness, pain, swelling, warmth and/or oozing of blood or pus from a skin wound, you should see a doctor as soon as possible. If the wound does not improve or spreads a few days after treatment, you should notify your healthcare provider.



Public Health

Infectious Disease Epidemiology

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