PROTECT YOURSELF FROM MRSA AND OTHER INFECTIOUS DISEASES

This information is provided for general workplaces only, not for healthcare facilities.

MRSA is a staph infection that is resistant to many antibiotics and can cause a skin infection. Staph bacteria can also cause serious infections such as surgical wound infections, bloodstream infections and pneumonia, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Protect yourself from MRSA with these common sense and easy-to-follow precautions.

Wash your hands! Thorough and frequent hand washing remains your best defense against germs. Scrub hands briskly with soap and water for at least 15-20 seconds, then dry them with a disposable towel and use another towel to turn off the faucet.

Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water aren’t available. Carry a small bottle of hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol for times when you don’t have access to soap and water. To use hand sanitizer, apply about ½ teaspoon of the product to the palm of your hand. Then rub your hands together, covering all surfaces of your hands and fingers until they’re dry.

Keep personal items personal. Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, clothing, and sports equipment. MRSA spreads on contaminated objects as well as through direct contact.

Keep wounds covered. Keep cuts and abrasions clean and covered with sterile, dry bandages until they heal. The discharge from infected sores may contain the MRSA bacteria, and keeping wounds covered will help keep the bacteria from spreading.

Sanitize linens. Wash towels and linens in hot water with added bleach and dry them in a hot dryer. Wash gym and athletic clothes after each wearing.

Check with your doctor. If you have a skin infection that requires treatment, ask your doctor if you should be tested for MRSA. Many doctors prescribe drugs that aren’t effective against antibiotic-resistant staph, which delays treatment and creates more resistant germs.

Employ good hygiene and proper hand-washing techniques: Hand washing doesn’t take much time or effort, but it offers great rewards in terms of preventing illness. Adopting this simple habit can play a major role in protecting your health.

For more information, including Frequently Asked Questions, about MRSA in the workplace, go to http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/mrsa/.