

Caring for MRSA at Home

Preventing the spread of infection to your family

Taking necessary precautions at home is important to reduce the chances of spreading MRSA among family members. Washing your hands appropriately (see [How to Wash Hands](#)) and following the guidelines for prevention (see [What Can I Do?](#)) are important for personal care and the care of others. In the home, there are some specific precautions and special care requirements to be taken, including appropriately changing bandages or dressings, handling laundry, and overcoming house-cleaning concerns.

Bandages/Dressings

If your provider instructs you to change bandages or other dressings, follow his/her specific guidelines. Generally, changing dressings will require the following steps:



- 1 Wash hands with soap and water.
- 2 Put on disposable gloves.
- 3 Remove the old dressing.
- 4 Put the old dressing in a plastic bag.
- 5 Take off the gloves, and put them in the plastic bag, too.
- 6 Wash and dry your hands.
- 7 Put on a new, clean pair of disposable gloves.
- 8 Apply the new dressing. If sore is leaking, extra dressings will be required to keep the drainage from leaking out.
- 9 Take off the second pair of gloves and put them in the plastic bag. Seal or tie the bag, and throw it away in your regular trash.
- 10 Wash and dry your hands.¹

Laundry

MRSA can spread from dirty clothes and bedding. When doing laundry, you will want to follow some precautions:

- Change towels and linens daily.
- Have a separate, impervious laundry hamper (e.g., solid plastic container, NOT one with ventilation holes or made of canvas or wicker) for the family member with the MRSA infection.
- Handle laundry that comes in contact with the infection separately from other household laundry.
- When collecting dirty laundry, hold it away from your body to prevent getting bacteria on your clothes, preferably in a plastic bag or container.
- Wear disposable gloves to handle laundry that is soiled with body fluids, like drainage from a sore, urine, or feces.
- Put the laundry in the washer immediately, or store it in a plastic bag until it can be washed.
- Wash with hot water and regular detergent – use bleach when possible.
- Dry on the hot setting, and make sure clothes are completely dry.
- Wash hands after handling dirty laundry and before handling clean laundry, even if you have been wearing gloves.
- Throw gloves away after taking them off, and do not reuse them.^{1,2}



House Cleaning

MRSA can live on surfaces for days, weeks, or even months.¹ When cleaning your house:

- Pay special attention to items that are frequently touched – light switches, door knobs, phones, toilets, sinks, tubs, kitchen counters, cell phones, pagers, computer keyboards, etc.
- Wipe the surface or object with a disinfectant, and let it dry. Choose commercial, phenol-containing disinfecting product. The EPA provides a list of [EPA-registered products effective against MRSA](#). You can also use a mix of 1 tablespoon bleach to 1 quart of water (using a fresh mix each day you clean).
- Use a phenol-containing spray to disinfect any cloth or upholstered surface.
- Have a designated chair or area for sitting for the family member with the MRSA infection. Use a hard surface or an easily cleaned plastic cover for easy disinfection. No one else should sit there until the infection has healed.
- Clean utensils and dishes in the usual manner with soap and hot water or using a standard home dishwasher.^{1,2}



Note: If body fluids or pus get onto surfaces, you need to follow these steps:

1. Put on disposable gloves.
2. Wipe up the fluids with a paper towel.
3. Throw the paper towel in a plastic bag-lined trashcan.
4. Clean the surface thoroughly with disinfectant and a paper towel.
5. Throw the paper towel in the plastic bag-lined trashcan.
6. Then wipe the surface again with disinfectant, and let it dry for at least 30 seconds.
7. Throw the paper towel in the plastic bag-lined trashcan.
8. Remove the gloves, and throw them in the trash.
9. Wash and dry your hands.¹



Sources:

1. GroupHealth Cooperative, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, & Washington State Department of Health (2006). Living with MRSA. Retrieved October 6, 2006 [on-line]. From <http://www.tpchd.org/files/library/3550750db4a81b14.pdf>.
2. Texas Department of State Health Services (2006). Information on staphylococcal infections – School athletic departments: Instructions for the athlete [on-line]. Retrieved October 5, 2006. From http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/health/antibiotic_resistance/mrsa/mrsa_athlete.pdf.

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