



Please print and post at your vessel/ facility for all employees to view

Fleet Memo #21: MRSA awareness and prevention

MRSA

Staphylococcus aureus ("staph") are common bacteria that live harmlessly on skin and in the noses of about 30% of the population. When the bacteria live on a person without causing illness, the person is said to be colonized. However, these bacteria can also cause a range of illnesses. Staph infections can cause minor skin problems, such as boils. Others result in more serious issues, ranging from moderate skin problems (cellulitis) all the way up to pneumonia and life-threatening bloodstream infections.

Methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA, are a type of staph bacteria that are resistant to common forms antibiotic treatments, including oxacillin, penicillin and amoxicillin.

Historically, MRSA infections were associated with patients who have chronic illnesses and weakened immune systems. It was especially common if those patients spent time in hospitals or other healthcare facilities, such as nursing homes and dialysis centers. When patients become infected in these environments, they are said to have "hospital-acquired" MRSA, or HA-MRSA.

However, MRSA infections also occur in healthy people who have not recently spent time in healthcare settings. These infections are called "community-associated" MRSA (or CA-MRSA). CA-MRSA usually causes skin infections such as abscesses, boils and pimples. Diagnosis of MRSA is made by laboratory testing of samples from the infected person.

Appearance

It starts as small red bumps, which resemble boils, spider bites, or painful pimples, may be accompanied by fever and can rapidly progress over a 24-48 hour period. These small, seemingly harmless bumps quickly turn into deep, painful abscesses requiring surgical draining. The bacteria attack the body, causing very serious infections to bones, joints, blood stream, lungs, and the heart.

Location

MRSA can be found offshore in barracks or other sleep areas, gyms and fitness facilities, locker rooms, kitchens and galleys, and many other places. The antibiotic-resistant staph strain MRSA has been found in the ocean, on public beaches, and in very close proximity to most navigable waterways in increasing frequency.



Transmission

People can contract staph via direct contact with another person who is infected or colonized. They can also be infected through contact with a contaminated surface. MRSA usually enter the body through broken skin such as a cut or scrape. People are at higher risk for infection if they play contact sports, share towels and athletic equipment, or share hygiene items like razors and toothbrushes. Individuals with compromised immunity and those living in crowded, unsanitary conditions are also at elevated risk.

Surfaces can be cleaned with disinfectants effective against *Staphylococcus aureus* (staph). Be sure to read and follow the directions regarding contact time required to kill the pathogens. One tablespoon of bleach can be mixed with one quart of water for cleaning, but must be mixed fresh daily as the chemicals become inactive. NEVER mix bleach with any other product for cleaning.

Laundry washed using the usual detergents and additives are safe to wear or touch according to the Center for Disease Control.

Treatment

Many staph skin infections do not require antibiotic treatment, and are treated by medically incising and draining the abscess or boil. Some MRSA infections will require treatment with antibiotics. Although MRSA are resistant to some common antibiotics, most MRSA infections will respond to at least one available type of antibiotic.

Prevention

Simple hygiene measures are the best ways to prevent transmission.

Wash hands regularly and thoroughly

Cover any open wounds, cuts or scratches

Avoid sharing personal items (such as towels and razors)

Regularly clean any potentially contaminated surfaces

Consult a medical professional if you develop an unusual pimple or cut that is oozing

Use antibiotics as prescribed, which includes finishing all doses according to schedule

Avoid using antibiotics when they are unnecessary, as it can contribute to the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria (such as MRSA)

Reporting

MRSA infections usually look harmless at first. Notify the captain under the following circumstances: If the wound rapidly becomes worse over a 24 hour period, if the wound will not heal or returns, if you experience fever, spreading redness, local swelling or heat, or if the wound begins to ooze or drain fluids.

Date: Fri, 18 Jan 2013 12:56:09 -0600

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brooksmccall@txcyber.com,"Dr. Jim Brooks" <drjmbrooks@aol.com>,
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From: Shannon Smith <shannonsmith@tdi-bi.com>
Subject: Fleet Memo #21- MRSA awareness and prevention and new HSE
contact
Cc: Shannon Smith <shannonsmith@tdi-bi.com>,
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X-SmarterMail-TotalSpamWeight: 0 (Authenticated)

Captains,

Methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA, are a type of staph bacteria that are resistant to common forms antibiotic treatments. The incidents of MRSA infections has been on the rise in offshore facilities and can have potentially serious complications. Please review the attached memo describing the symptoms and methods of prevention.

Report suspected symptoms of MRSA and all health related incidents/ accidents/ illnesses/ injuries by email to hse@tdi-bi.com. This new group email has been created to give the vessels a single email address that will copy the people in TDI Management that need to know about these issues. Thank you.

Shannon

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