

# MRSA MATTERS ...

but why does it matter to you?

MRSA Education for Veterans with  
Spinal Cord Injury



# What is MRSA?

- ❖ MRSA (pronounced: mersa) stands for **M**ethicillin-**R**esistant *Staphylococcus Aureus*.
- ❖ It is a germ (bacteria) that cannot be killed by the antibiotics (medicines) usually used to kill germs.
- ❖ Germs like MRSA are all around us – **in homes, communities, and hospitals.**
- ❖ Because common antibiotics cannot kill MRSA, if you are infected with MRSA it can be very hard to treat.



# What is MRSA? (Nurse)

- ❖ Be sure to show the patient how MRSA is written, and pronounce it for them several times.
- ❖ The most important thing to note here is that MRSA is a germ that cannot be killed by common antibiotics.
- ❖ Make sure the patient understands that MRSA is everywhere, not just in the hospital.
- ❖ Make sure the patient understands that MRSA carriers are not treated, and that MRSA infections are. Infections can be difficult to treat because common antibiotics do not kill MRSA.



# Why it matters ...

As a Veteran with a spinal cord injury, you may be at higher risk of having or getting MRSA due to:

- having wounds or pressure ulcers
- frequent use of antibiotics
- use of catheter devices such as a urinary catheter
- spending more time in the hospital
- frequent contact with other people who might carry MRSA



# Why it matters (Nurses)

Explain to the patient that, as a person with spinal cord injury, they may be at higher risk for having or getting MRSA.

The reasons for this include:

- having wounds or pressure ulcers
- frequent use of antibiotics
- use of catheter devices such as a urinary catheter
- spending more time in the hospital
- frequent contact with other people who might carry MRSA

Allow the patient to ask questions.

# If you test positive for MRSA you ...

- have a greater chance of getting sick (infected) from MRSA.
- may pass MRSA on to other patients or your provider.
- may pass MRSA on to your family, friends, or loved ones.



Picture of  
MRSA  
Infections on  
the skin.



## **If you test positive for MRSA you... (Nurse)**

Explain to the patient that just because they are MRSA positive does not mean they will get sick or get an infection. Being a MRSA carrier does not mean you will receive treatment for MRSA, but it does mean that you:

- have a greater chance of getting sick with MRSA.
- may pass MRSA on to other patients or your provider.
- may pass MRSA on to your family, friends, or loved ones.



# What can you do?

1. Know your MRSA status! (Ask your provider for the results every time you are tested.)
2. Always clean all of your personal equipment.
3. Always clean your hands, if you can't clean them on your own, ask for help!
4. Ask your provider, family, and other visitors to clean their hands too!

When do you wash your hands?



# What can you do? (Nurse)

For this slide, it is important to emphasize the 4 main points. If the veteran also remembers some of the details, that is great!

Read details underneath each bullet.

1. Know your MRSA status! (Ask your provider for the results of your test **every time** you are tested.)

2. Always clean all of your personal equipment

-Wheelchairs

-Gloves or Wrist guards

-Adaptive equipment

- Ask for help if you cannot clean these items on your own!

3. Always clean your hands, if you can't clean them on your own, ask for help!

-Before and after eating

- After group activities like

- After sneezing

physical therapy and games

- After bowel or bladder care

- Before and after you leave any hospital room!

4. Ask your provider, family, and other visitors to clean their hands too!

# Cleaning your hands makes a BIG difference!

MRSA on the hands before hand hygiene is gone after hand hygiene



Donskey, C.J and Eckstein, B.C. *The Hands Give it Away*. N Eng J Med; 360, 3: e3.

# Cleaning your hands makes a BIG difference! (Nurse)

Explain to the patient that the image on the left shows MRSA on the hands of a provider.

The provider then washed their hands ...

The second image shows that after the provider washed her hands, the MRSA that was on her hands was no longer there!

# Things to Remember When Washing Hands

Alcohol hand sanitizer OR soap and water can be used to clean your hands.

- Use soap and water if your hands are visibly soiled.



When washing your hands be sure to:



- Rub hands together vigorously long enough to sing “Happy Birthday” (or about 15 seconds).



- Rinse hands and wrists.
- When drying hands, be sure to dry from fingertips down to your wrists.



- Use a paper towel to turn off the faucet and to open the door to leave the restroom.

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