MRSA Infection: Working Together to Prevent It

What is MRSA and why is it serious?
MRSA is a germ that lives on the skin. Most of the time it does not cause any problems, but sometimes can cause serious infection.

MRSA stands for Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. It is a common germ that many of us have. But if it causes infection, it is harder to treat than other germs. If someone who is already sick gets a MRSA infection, he or she can become much sicker.

How does MRSA spread?
The MRSA germ can:
- Pass from hands to other people, surfaces or objects
- Pass from person to person through:
  - Contact with someone who has MRSA
  - Sharing sports equipment
  - Sharing personal hygiene items

Are you at risk for MRSA infection?
Anyone can get a MRSA infection. But people at highest risk are those who:
- Are ill or are recovering from surgery
- Have the MRSA germ in their body and become ill with something else
- Are very young or elderly
- Are in close contact with someone who has a MRSA infection (especially if you have an open wound or cut on the skin)

What are the symptoms of MRSA infection?
Call your doctor if you or a family member have these symptoms – especially if you are at higher risk for, or have already had, a MRSA infection:
- Fever of 100.4 degrees or higher
- Skin that is painful, tender, and red
- Red bumps on the skin (may look like pimples or spider bites)
- Bumps that are filled with pus

What can you do to help prevent MRSA infection?
- Clean your hands often, using sanitizer gel or soap and water (for 15-20 seconds), especially:
  - After touching a bandage
  - After blowing your nose or covering a cough or sneeze with your hand
  - After using the bathroom
  - Before eating
- Keep your skin healthy
  - At the gym, wear sports gloves or use a towel between your skin and the equipment.
  - Wear long sleeves and long pants during activities that can be rough on your skin.
  - Keep cuts or scrapes clean and covered.
  - Use lotion to keep your skin from cracking.
- Do not touch other people’s cuts or bandages.
- Do not share items such as towels or razors.
- Take antibiotics only as your doctor prescribes.

It’s okay to ask your doctors, nurses or any health care professional if they have cleaned their hands before caring for you. We need to work together to prevent the spread of MRSA.