MRSA IN THE COMMUNITY SETTING

What is MRSA?
- Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus *aureus*
- Staphylococcus aureus is a bacteria commonly found on the skin and in the nose of healthy people.
- Some staph infections are easily treated, while others are not – i.e. MRSA is staph that is resistant to methicillin.
- 20-30% of people carry this bacteria without it causing an infection (they are colonized).

What does MRSA look like?
- The symptoms will depend on where the infection is taking place.
- With wounds, it will cause redness of the surrounding skin and an oozing from the wound. If the infection is serious, fever, tiredness and headache may also be present.
- If it is in the urine, it may cause a burning sensation during urination or having to urinate frequently.
- Some people can have the MRSA bacteria in their body but have no symptoms. This is called being colonized and is only a problem if that person is in the hospital or another healthcare facility.

How is MRSA spread?
- Direct physical contact
  - MRSA skin infections are contagious as long as they drain fluid.
- Spread through objects contaminated with infected bodily fluids
- Once you have the bacteria on your hands for example, if proper hand hygiene is not present, you can pass it on to others or infect yourself through an open wound.
- You can be infected with Staph aureus from someone who is colonized with this bacteria (and does not have any symptoms) which is why good hand hygiene is always important!

Who can get MRSA?
- Most commonly occurs in hospitals and other acute care facilities
- Occurs mostly in those with a compromised immune system
- People with chronic health conditions are also more susceptible.
- Others at risk are those with wounds, in-dwelling medical devices, sutures, catheters, and IV lines.

How can I prevent the spread of a MRSA infection?
- Practice good HYGIENE.
- Washing thoroughly with warm water and soap (or alcohol based sanitizer)
- Cover the MRSA skin infections until they are healed.
  - When changing dressings, use routine practices and dispose of the dirty dressings immediately.
- Cover any of your own cuts or scrapes.
- Do not share personal items such as towels, razors, brushes, etc.
• Make sure any soiled clothing is washed; water and regular laundry detergent is fine.

How is MRSA in the community different than in an acute care setting?

• In hospitals, the majority of patients have the risk factors for acquiring an infection – close quarters, immunocompromised, chronic conditions, on long-term antibiotics, etc.
• In the community, the majority of people have a good immune system and will not become ill with this bacteria.
• Isolation occurs in a hospital setting because of the high chance of transmission and acquisition.
• No recommendations to isolate in the community setting.

What environmental cleaning should be done?

• Keeping MRSA skin infections covered will prevent the bacteria being spread to surfaces/objects.
• Even if a surface does have MRSA on it, this does not mean that you will be infected (You need to have the risk factors/ some kind of entry for the bacteria).
• Continue using your everyday cleaning products – ensure proper use (read label).
• Ensure all staff (and not just cleaning staff) understand the proper us of the cleaning agents.

Resources

http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/
http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi/mrsa-eng.php
http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi/camrsa-eng.php

Heymann, Control of Communicable Diseases Manual, 19th Ed