

Staph Skin Infections

What is a Staph skin infection?

Staphylococcus aureus (Staph) bacteria are commonly found on the skin of healthy persons. A Staph skin infection can be a pimple, rash, boil, or an open wound. Staph infections often begin with an injury to the skin. Symptoms of Staph infection may include redness, warmth, swelling and tenderness of the skin. Sometimes it does not cause any problems; sometimes it causes minor infections, such as pimples or boils. If left untreated, it can cause serious skin infections or worse.

How do Staph skin infections spread?

Staph lives on skin and survives on objects for 24 hours or more. Staph can rub off on the skin of an infected person onto the skin of another person during rigorous skin-to-skin contact. Or, the Staph bacteria can come off of the infected skin of a person onto a shared object, and get onto the skin of the next person who uses it. Examples of commonly shared objects include towels, soap, razors, and athletic equipment.

How can I prevent myself or my family members from getting infected?

Wash your hands with soap and warm water. Keep cuts and scrapes clean with soap and water. Avoid skin contact and sharing personal items with anyone you suspect could have a Staph skin infection. When using protective gloves to treat infected area, remove and dispose of properly; wash your hands with soap and water after removing them. Do not share personal items with other persons who might have skin infections.

What should I do if I think I have a skin infection?

Consult your healthcare provider as soon as possible if you think you have a skin infection. Early treatment can help prevent the infection from getting worse. Be sure to follow directions from your doctor or healthcare provider closely, even when you start to feel better. Not taking all of your pills may lead to stronger, antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

If I was told by my healthcare provider that I have a Staph skin infection, how do I keep others from getting infected?

- Keep the infected area covered with clean, dry bandages. Pus from infected wounds is very infectious.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water, especially after changing your bandages or touching the infected skin.
- Regularly clean your bathroom, kitchen, and all other rooms, as well as your personal items. Wash clothes and other items that become soiled with hot water or bleach, when possible.
- Drying clothes in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying them also helps to kill bacteria in clothes.

For specific concerns about Staph skin infections, call the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Communicable Disease Control Section at 603-271-4496 or 800-852-3345 x4496. For further information, refer to the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention website
at www.cdc.gov or the New Hampshire
Department of Health and Human
Services website at www.dhhs.nh.gov.