



FYI

MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus)

Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to simply as “staph”, is a bacteria commonly found on the skin of healthy people. Occasionally, staph can get into the body and cause an infection. This infection can be minor (such as pimples, boils, and other skin conditions) or serious (such as blood infections or pneumonia). Methicillin is an antibiotic commonly used to treat staph infections. Although methicillin is very effective in treating most staph infections, some staph bacteria have developed resistance to methicillin and can no longer be killed by this antibiotic. These resistant bacteria are called methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA.

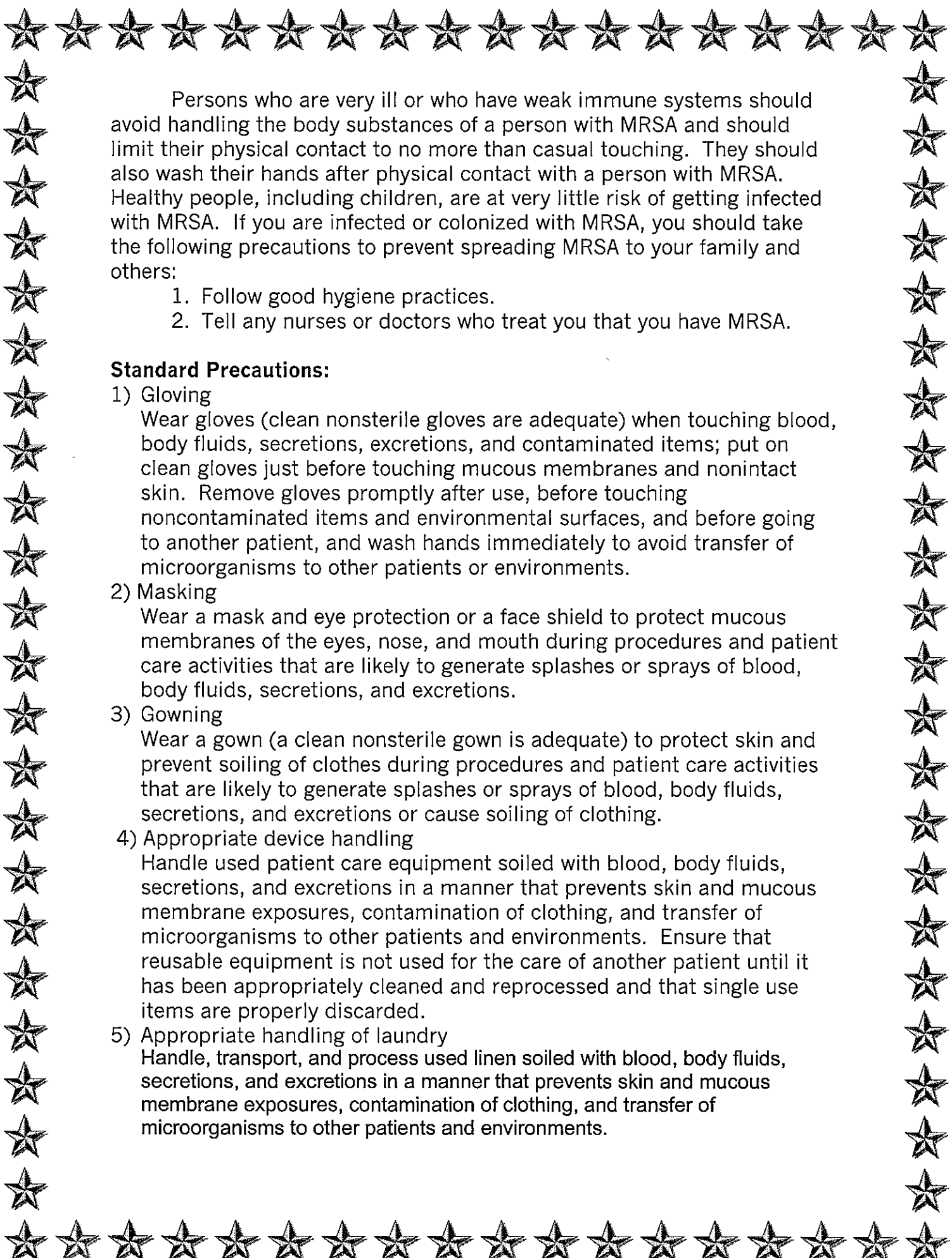
MRSA infection usually develops in hospital patients who are elderly or very sick, or who have an open wound (such as a bedsore) or a tube (such as a urinary catheter) going into their body. Healthy people rarely get MRSA. MRSA can be found on the skin, in the nose, and in blood and urine.

A precise number is not known, but according to some estimates as many as 80,000 patients a year get an MRSA infection after they enter the hospital. The number who become colonized is not known. Colonization means that MRSA is present on or in the body without causing illness. Infection means that MRSA is making the person sick. MRSA can spread among very sick with weak immune systems that may not be able to fight off infections. MRSA is almost spread by physical contact, and not through the air. Hospitals usually take special steps to prevent the spread of MRSA from patient to patient.

In general, the following precautions are recommended for the care of a person with MRSA at home:

1. Wash your hands after caring for the person with MRSA.
2. Periodically clean the person’s room and personal items with a commercial disinfectant or a fresh solution of one part bleach and 100 parts water (for example, one tablespoon bleach in one quart of water).
3. Wear gloves if you handle body substances (blood, urine, wound drainage) and wash your hands after removing the gloves.

Again healthy people are at very little risk of getting infected with MRSA. So as long as family members or other visitors are healthy, it’s ok for them to be in the same room with a person with MRSA. Casual contact, such as touching or hugging, is also ok. However, be sure to wash your hands before you leave the hospital room (or the patient’s home).



Persons who are very ill or who have weak immune systems should avoid handling the body substances of a person with MRSA and should limit their physical contact to no more than casual touching. They should also wash their hands after physical contact with a person with MRSA. Healthy people, including children, are at very little risk of getting infected with MRSA. If you are infected or colonized with MRSA, you should take the following precautions to prevent spreading MRSA to your family and others:

1. Follow good hygiene practices.
2. Tell any nurses or doctors who treat you that you have MRSA.

Standard Precautions:

1) Gloving

Wear gloves (clean nonsterile gloves are adequate) when touching blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions, and contaminated items; put on clean gloves just before touching mucous membranes and nonintact skin. Remove gloves promptly after use, before touching noncontaminated items and environmental surfaces, and before going to another patient, and wash hands immediately to avoid transfer of microorganisms to other patients or environments.

2) Masking

Wear a mask and eye protection or a face shield to protect mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, and mouth during procedures and patient care activities that are likely to generate splashes or sprays of blood, body fluids, secretions, and excretions.

3) Gowning

Wear a gown (a clean nonsterile gown is adequate) to protect skin and prevent soiling of clothes during procedures and patient care activities that are likely to generate splashes or sprays of blood, body fluids, secretions, and excretions or cause soiling of clothing.

4) Appropriate device handling

Handle used patient care equipment soiled with blood, body fluids, secretions, and excretions in a manner that prevents skin and mucous membrane exposures, contamination of clothing, and transfer of microorganisms to other patients and environments. Ensure that reusable equipment is not used for the care of another patient until it has been appropriately cleaned and reprocessed and that single use items are properly discarded.

5) Appropriate handling of laundry

Handle, transport, and process used linen soiled with blood, body fluids, secretions, and excretions in a manner that prevents skin and mucous membrane exposures, contamination of clothing, and transfer of microorganisms to other patients and environments.