



SAFE & SOUND
An Arizona Patient Safety Initiative
Sponsored by the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association
www.azhha.org/patient_safety

FACT SHEET

Release: Immediate

Contact: Bridget O’Gara, vice president of Communications
602-445-4300, ext. 4318, or bogara@azhha.org
-or-
Carlos DellaMaddalena, public relations
Manager, BCBSAZ 602-864-4067, or
cdellama@azblue.com

The Facts on *Preventing MRSA: It's In Our Hands*

The Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association (AzHHA), Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona (BCBSAZ) are joining forces to prevent the spread of methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) in Arizona. The initiative—*Preventing MRSA: It's In Our Hands*—will be introduced to Arizona hospital patient safety and infection control leaders on May 15 and rolled out to consumers by individual hospitals throughout the next 18 months.

- The AzHHA campaign, *Preventing MRSA: It's In Our Hands*, is sponsored by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona and endorsed by the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC). These leading healthcare organizations have come together to educate Arizonans about MRSA and how to prevent it. They believe an informed public will help reduce MRSA in all environments.
- AzHHA and its member hospitals are actively promoting MRSA prevention strategies to Arizona’s healthcare professionals, business leaders, consumers and legislators by promoting the following primary MRSA prevention strategies:
 - hand washing with either soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds or with an alcohol-based waterless hand sanitizer;
 - taking antibiotics as prescribed by a physician;
 - keeping cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed;
 - avoiding the use of sharing personal items such as towels, washcloths, bar soaps and razors;
 - cleaning and disinfecting objects as well as commonly touched surfaces (keyboards, light switches and door knobs); and
 - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reports that the main mode of MRSA transmission to others is through human hands. Therefore, proper hand washing is critical.

-more-



2901 N. Central Ave., Ste 900
Phoenix, Arizona 85012-2729
602-445-4300 www.azhha.org



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

www.azblue.com

A proud sponsor of *Preventing MRSA:*
It's In Our Hands.



ASSOCIATION FOR PROFESSIONALS IN
INFECTION CONTROL & EPIDEMIOLOGY, INC.

www.apic.org

AZHHA, as part of its *Safe & Sound* patient safety initiative, recommends “antibiotic stewardship” as an important step in preventing MRSA and keeping its incidence from growing.

- Antibiotic stewardship means that all involved—physicians and consumers—are vigilant about the use, abuse and overuse of antibiotic therapy.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that MRSA and other significant infection-causing bacteria are becoming resistant to the most commonly prescribed antibiotic treatments.
- Factors contributing to antibiotic resistance are frequent exposure to antibiotics, not taking antibiotics as directed or taking antibiotics for a viral infection. Other ways to use antibiotics responsibly are to get them from the proper sources (not from other countries), use only your own prescription and to finish an entire prescribed course of antibiotics.
- Consumers may take an active role in antibiotic stewardship by recognizing that physicians may not prescribe antibiotics to treat conditions like a cold or flu, which typically do not require antibiotics.

AZHHA is the organizing entity for the Institute for Healthcare Improvement’s (IHI’s) *5 Million Lives Campaign* in Arizona. This campaign includes a focus on reducing MRSA through in the healthcare setting. Arizona hospitals have embraced the *5 Million Lives Campaign* with nearly 85 percent of the state’s inpatient beds participating in it.

- To reduce MRSA, the *5 Million Lives Campaign* recommends:
 1. improved hand hygiene among healthcare workers;
 2. fastidious disinfection of the environment and equipment;
 3. consideration for surveillance of high risk populations;
 4. compliance with central venous catheter; and
 5. ventilator best practices for infection control.

Although the incidence of MRSA is on the rise, it is treatable with less common forms of antibiotics.

- According to CDC, in 1974, MRSA infections accounted for 2 percent of total staph infections; in 1995 that number rose to 22 percent and by 2004 it had jumped to 63 percent.
- MRSA is resistant to common antibiotics such as methicillin, oxacillin, penicillin and amoxicillin. It can, however, be treated with other classes of antibiotics. It is more difficult to manage than other types of staph infections.

When MRSA was first identified in the 1960s, it was mainly found in hospitals and nursing homes. Today, community associated MRSA is one of the most common causes of skin infections. It is prevalent in homes, day care centers, gyms, schools and elsewhere in the community.

- As reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, community associated MRSA has become the most frequent cause of skin and soft tissue infections presenting to emergency departments in the United States.

- Patients often bring infections into the hospital, therefore infection rates can be misleading and not indicative of a hospital's infection control rates. In fact, according to a study released in 2007 by APIC three of four patients entering a healthcare facility with MRSA walked in with the bacteria, acquired it either in the community or during a previous stay in a healthcare facility.
- APIC has reported that 46 of every 1,000 healthcare facility patients in the organization's 2007 study were infected or colonized with MRSA. Of those, 77 percent were identified within 48 hours of hospital admission. This finding suggests that 35 of 46 patients walk into healthcare facilities with MRSA.