

# Facts About MRSA and Swimming Pools

## What is MRSA and how can it affect me?

*Staphylococcus aureus* ("staph") is a germ that often lives in the nose or on the skin of healthy people. **MRSA**, short for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, is a type of staph germ that is resistant to certain antibiotics.

In the community, most MRSA infections are skin infections (pustules, boils) that may be:

- Mistaken for spider bites
- Red, swollen, painful, warm to the touch, and have pus or other drainage
- Accompanied by a fever

To learn more about MRSA, visit [www.cdc.gov/mrsa](http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa)

## Can MRSA be spread at recreational water facilities?

MRSA **does not survive long in pools and other treated swimming places (for example, hot tubs/spas) that have proper disinfectant (chlorine) and pH levels.** There have been no reports of MRSA spreading through contact with recreational water.

However, MRSA **can be spread at recreational water facilities and other places by direct and indirect contact with infected persons.** Direct contact can happen when you touch another person's MRSA infection. Indirect contact can happen when you share items (like towels or razors) or touch surfaces (like hand rails or locker room benches) contaminated with MRSA. MRSA is most likely to spread when it comes into contact with an uncovered cut or scrape.

## How do I protect myself, my family, and others when visiting recreational water facilities?

Take action! There are steps you can take to protect yourself and others from MRSA.

### Steps to Protect Yourself

- All swimmers
  - » Don't touch any bumps, cuts, infected areas, or bandages on another person's skin.
  - » Don't share items, like towels or razors, with other people.
  - » Keep cuts and scrapes clean and cover them with bandages.
  - » Talk to recreational water facility operators to make sure they:
    - Clean frequently-touched surfaces
    - Wash towels after each use
    - Maintain proper disinfectant and pH levels in the water to kill germs
- If you have a skin infection
  - » Don't go in recreational water. Other germs from the water can get into your wound(s) and cause additional infections.

### Steps to Protect Others

- If you have a skin infection
  - » It might be difficult to keep infected skin adequately covered while in the water, so it is best to stay out of recreational water. If you do go in the water, cover any bumps, cuts, or infected areas with water tight bandages.
  - » Practice good hygiene by regularly washing hands with soap and water.
  - » Don't let other people touch your bumps, cuts, infected areas, or bandages.



### SWIMMERS AND PARENTS

For more information on how to stay healthy when you swim, visit [www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming)

### POOL OPERATORS

For information on how to properly disinfect your facility and prevent MRSA from spreading, visit [www.cdc.gov/mrsa/environment/athletic-facilities.html](http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/environment/athletic-facilities.html)

For guidelines and resources on how to prevent the spread of other germs at your facility, visit

[www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/audience-aquatics-staff.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/audience-aquatics-staff.html)



[www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/rwi/illnesses/mrsa.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/rwi/illnesses/mrsa.html)



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