



VANCOMYCIN RESISTANT STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS (VRSA)

What is STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS (Staph)?

Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to as "Staph," are bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Approximately 25-30 percent of the population is colonized (when bacteria are present, but not causing an infection) in the nose with staph bacteria. Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections in the United States. Most of these skin infections are minor (such as pimples and boils) and can be treated without antibiotics. However, staph bacteria can cause serious infections (such as surgical wound infections, bloodstream infections and pneumonia). In the past, most serious Staph infections were treated with an antibiotic related to penicillin. With widespread use of this antibiotic, treatment of these infections has become more difficult because the Staph bacteria have become resistant to various antibiotics, including penicillin.

What is VANCOMYCIN RESISTANT STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS (VRSA)?

VRSA is a type of antibiotic resistant Staph. While most Staph bacteria can be treated with an antibiotic known as vancomycin, some have developed a resistance and can no longer be treated with vancomycin. Other antibiotics can be used to treat VRSA.

Who gets VRSA infections?

Staph infections, including VRSA, occur most frequently among persons in hospitals and health care facilities who have underlying health conditions; previous infections with other drug-resistant organisms; invasive procedures and devices; recent hospitalizations; and recent exposure to Vancomycin and other antibiotics.

Are VRSA infections treatable?

Yes. There are other antibiotics available to treat VRSA.

How can the spread of VRSA be prevented?

In health care facilities, the use of proper infection control practices such as frequent handwashing and proper use of gloves before and after contact with body fluids can reduce the spread of VRSA. Additionally, proper antibiotic usage is very important to prevent resistance to antibiotics.

What should I do if a family member or close contact has VRSA?

Outside of the health care setting, persons having close physical contact with someone infected with VRSA should wash their hands frequently with soap and water and avoid contact with infected wounds, wound drainage and contaminated materials such as bandages. If visiting someone who is hospitalized with a VRSA infection, follow hospital infection control recommendations.

For more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/organisms/visa_vrsa/visa_vrsa.html