



Information about *Staphylococcus Aureus* infection

The Department of Public Health - HSE Dublin and Midlands is currently investigating a cluster of *Staphylococcus aureus* soft tissue infections linked to a local community.

What is *Staphylococcus aureus*?

Staphylococcus aureus (SA) is a bacterium (germ) that commonly lives on healthy skin. About one third of healthy people carry it quite harmlessly, usually on moist surfaces such as the nostrils, armpits and groin. This is known as colonisation.

What type of illness does it cause?

All SAs can cause harm if they get an opportunity to enter the body, for example, through a cut or a graze. They can cause boils or skin abscesses and are occasionally associated with more serious infections of the lungs, blood, joints and bones.

How do staph infections spread?

Anyone can get a SA infection. It can be spread through:

- close skin contact
- contact with an item or surface that has SA on it from someone else, for example shared gym equipment, shared razors, shared towels.

Symptoms of a staph skin infection

Symptoms can include:

- A painful red lump or bump
- Hot, red and swollen skin
- Sores, crusts or blisters
- Sore, red eyelids or eyes

What do I need to do now?

- Follow the patient information advice attached with particular attention to personal and environmental hygiene
- Monitor your child/household for signs and symptoms of infection
- Contact your GP for assessment and treatment if symptoms develop in your child or member of your household
- **Contact your GP or Out of Hours GP if you think you have a skin infection or other symptoms of concern:**
 - **If you are very unwell attend your local emergency department for assessment.**
- Seek medical help at the first sign of infection in a cut, such as redness, swelling, pain, or pus.

Infection prevention and control advice

- You should take good care of your skin. If you suffer from eczema, discuss the best treatment for this with your GP/Dermatology Team.
- Keep all cuts and grazes clean with liquid soap and water, apply disinfectant cream, and cover with dry dressings until scabbed over or healed.
- Shower or bathe regularly
- Put on clean clothes daily and wash bedclothes and towels on a regular basis using normal washing detergent but at the highest temperature the materials will allow. Nightwear should be changed when bed clothes/linen are washed/changed.
- Do not share personal items such as towels, razors, toothbrushes, water bottles, and facecloths.
- In shared facilities, such as gyms, use fresh towels. Only go if you have no symptoms of infection and put a towel between your skin and the equipment. Importantly, shower afterwards and use a separate (second) clean towel to dry yourself. After each visit, wash any towels which you have taken to shared facilities.

Examples of what *Staph Aureus* soft tissue infection may look like?



A painful red lump on the skin. It could also be an abscess (a build-up of pus).



Hot, red or swollen skin. This could be an infection called cellulitis.

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