

MRSA Infections Increasing, Cal. Official Says

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More Cases of a drug-resistant strain of staph infection called MRSA are turning up in California, state health officials say.

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA for short, is a so-called “Super Bug” infection that cannot be effectively treated with commonly used antibiotics, such as methicillin. In some cases, MRSA infections can be fatal and result in the condition casually known as the flesh-eating virus, according to a new report in the *Ventura County Star*.

Previously confined mostly to older people infected in hospitals, nursing homes, and other healthcare settings, MRSA is being found more and more in so-called community settings such as schools, gyms and health clubs, military barracks, jails, and other locations where many people are living or gathering in close quarters. In most cases, MRSA bacteria spreads due to improper cleaning or sanitizing of medical devices, exercise equipment, or other surfaces.

In 1999, there were 13,000 MRSA-infected patients at hospitals across California, according to a new report from the state’s Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development. By 2007, the number had swelled to about 52,000 cases.

The number of people who were infected at home rose from about 50 percent of all cases in 1999 to about 75 percent in 2007, the report found. MRSA cases involving children also dramatically increased from 188 in 1999 to 3,315 in 2007, while the number of infected adults younger than 65 increased more than six fold.

About one quarter of those people hospitalized with MRSA in 2007 died within 30 days, the state report found. California health officials say the increase in MRSA infections is showing up statewide and is not confined to a single county or city.