

## Preventing & treating recurrent Staphylococcal skin infections

### Te ārai me whakarauora i ngā pokenga kiri Staphylococcal

Some people get repeat Staphylococcal skin infections while others around them don't.

If this happens to you, it usually doesn't mean you have a problem with your immunity. It usually just means that you have more Staph on your skin or up your nose, or you have a more aggressive type of Staph. Over time, which can be up to two years, you'll develop immunity to Staph and will stop getting so many infections.



In families, schools, preschools, sports clubs and residential care facilities, Staph infections can easily spread from person to person, so several people get infected. But some of them may stay well and not show any signs of infection, even though they carry Staph in their nose or other parts of their body. These people can spread the infection to others.

### Avoiding repeat Staph infections

- Make sure you treat any other skin conditions, such as eczema, psoriasis, or tinea (athlete's foot).
- If you or anyone in the house has an infected cut or sore, cover it with a plaster. This will help stop it infecting other parts of your body and stop it spreading to other people. Any type of plaster is fine.
- Wash your hands properly with liquid soap and water or an alcohol-based hand gel, taking care to clean between your fingers and up to your wrists. See the page on *Hand hygiene* (go to [www.healthinfo.org.nz](http://www.healthinfo.org.nz) and search for "hand hygiene") to find out when you should wash your hands and how to wash them properly.
- Have a bath or shower at least daily and more often if you do very sweaty activities. If you have dry skin and aren't very active, a bath or shower every second day should be OK. Wash all over your body with soap, including between your toes, around your bottom, under your arms, into your groin area and into any skin folds.
- Keep your fingernails clean and short.
- Don't share razors, towels, facecloths, toothbrushes, containers of creams or ointments, make-up or other personal items with anyone else in the house.



- Throw away any used razors. Also throw away any skin creams or make-up that might have been contaminated.
- If you use creams or ointments from a container, use a new clean stick or spoon every time to remove the amount you need. This stops you contaminating the whole container.

## Protecting your home

- Clean all hard surfaces, including bathrooms and floors with detergent and water.
- Vacuum all carpets, rugs, mattresses and electric blankets.
- Wash all sheets, towels and underwear regularly, preferably in hot water.
- Wash pet bedding regularly, especially dog bedding. Dogs can carry Staph infections without showing any signs.

How often you do this depends on how many people are in your household and how dirty things get. For example, a family of eight in a three-bedroom house should vacuum and clean every second day. An older couple may only need to vacuum and clean once every two weeks.

Change towels and sheets weekly. Change underwear daily.

## Decolonisation

If you keep getting Staph infections, your doctor may recommend that you try and get rid of the bacteria from your skin. This is known as *decolonisation* (go to [www.healthinfo.org.nz](http://www.healthinfo.org.nz) and search for “decolonisation”). Your household contacts will need to be treated at the same time.

Written by HealthInfo clinical advisers. Last reviewed May 2022.