

**Severe *Staphylococcus aureus* Infections  
Now Reportable by Healthcare Providers**

Effective February 13, 2008, a severe *Staphylococcus aureus* infection in a previously healthy person resulting in death or admission to an intensive care unit is immediately reportable from healthcare providers to local health departments. **A previously healthy person is defined as one who has not been hospitalized or had surgery, dialysis, or residency in a long-term care facility in the past year, and did not have an indwelling catheter or percutaneous medical device at the time of culture. Infection with either methicillin-sensitive or methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* (MSSA or MRSA) is reportable if the patient fits the case definition.** For now, a case of toxic shock syndrome due to *S. aureus* should continue to be reported under toxic shock syndrome and not under this new case category.

Public health surveillance for these severe *S. aureus* cases via reporting will help identify the types of community-associated *S. aureus* infections, including MRSA infections, that are the most concerning to the public and health officials. Examples of severe illness syndromes caused by *S. aureus* include invasive skin and soft-tissue infection, necrotizing fasciitis, musculoskeletal infection (pyomyositis, osteomyelitis), severe pneumonia, empyema, necrotizing pneumonia, disseminated infections with septic emboli, bacteremia, and sepsis syndrome. Surveillance data can help to identify populations at risk for severe community-associated *S. aureus* infections, and provide additional information that could be used to plan prevention and control measures.

If a case of severe *S. aureus* infection in a previously healthy person fitting the surveillance case definition is identified, healthcare providers should immediately notify their local health department of the case and send in a filled out Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) form. The local health departments will also fill out a separate case report form and may need to follow up with local healthcare providers for additional information.

CDPH information on MRSA and links to other sources of information are provided at <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/MRSA.aspx>.