

## **TOOLBOX TALK #43**

### **MRSA IN THE WORKPLACE**

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* – more commonly known as MRSA – is a potentially dangerous type of staph bacteria that can lead to difficult-to-treat infections. MRSA is resistant to certain antibiotics and, although an infection may begin as a skin sore, it can become serious and potentially deadly, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) warns.

#### **How it spreads**

MRSA usually is spread by coming in contact with infected skin, but it can also transfer if you touched a surface an infected person previously touched. It generally appears as a bump on the skin that may be red, warm, full of pus and painful. According to NIOSH, five “C’s” allow MRSA to spread more easily:

- Crowding
- Frequent skin-to-skin Contact
- Compromised skin (such as a cut, rash or scrape)
- Contaminated items or surfaces
- Lack of Cleanliness

NIOSH points out that as long as the wound is kept clean, dry and covered, typically an employee with MRSA can safely continue to work.

#### **Prevention**

Employers and supervisors can help prevent the spread of MRSA. Among the ways:

- Promote a culture of safety to demonstrate you care about workers’ health.
- Ensure all workers have access to washrooms and handwashing supplies, and actively encourage them to practice proper hand hygiene.
- Maintain good, routine housekeeping.
- Immediately clean and disinfect any surface that has come in contact with MRSA drainage or blood.
- Ensure personal protective equipment and first aid supplies are available to workers.