Can you get staph from being around someone with it? [1]

Dear Alice,

My family and I have been visiting in a home with someone with a staph infection resulting from cancer surgery. Are we at risk for catching it from just being around him in his environment for an extended period?

Answer

Dear Reader,

The chances are low of your contracting a staph infection from visiting the home of someone with a staph infection (from staphylococci bacteria normally found on the skin). You would need to make direct contact with the infected area via an area of broken skin of your own (i.e., wound, insect bite, injury, etc.), as staph is not an airborne disease.

Good hygiene can also help in protecting one's self from getting staph infections, including:

- Keeping abrasions and cuts cleaned and covered with a sterile dressing until they are healed.
- Avoiding contact with other people's wounds or with material contaminated from those wounds.
- Keeping hands clean by washing them thoroughly with warm water and soap.
- Not sharing razors, ointments, soap, wash cloths, or clothing.
- Wiping down all non-washable athletic equipment (head protectors, mats, equipment, etc.) with antibacterial solution or alcohol.

If you do come into direct contact with someone who has a staph infection, wash your hands immediately with warm water and soap. In addition, keep any open sores or cuts covered to lessen the chance of your becoming infected. If, for some reason, you develop a suspicious skin boil or sore, have your health care provider examine it right away. If you did become infected with staph, the sooner you receive a diagnosis and antibiotics, the better.

For a breakdown of different ways that staph infections can affect a person, including info about signs and symptoms, read the Related Q&A listed below.

Alice!

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