

Staphylococcus aureus

S. aureus

S. aureus is a risk group 2 bacterium. It is considered a **reproductive pathogen** as it can lead to preterm birth if it causes infection of the amniotic fluid. Mothers with *S. aureus* infection in the third trimester is more likely to pass the bacteria to their infants at birth or through close contact. Certain strains of *S. aureus* produce TSST-1, which is responsible for 75% of toxic shock syndrome cases. Young women are at higher risk for TSS.

How can I be exposed to *S. aureus*?

- Transmission occurs via ingestion of food containing enterotoxins.
- Close contact after birth by infected mother.
- Laboratory workers may be exposed by parenteral inoculation, open wounds, ingestion of infected materials, and contact with aerosols.

How can I protect myself from exposure?

- Avoid direct skin contact by wearing protective clothing and gloves.
- Avoid mucous membrane exposure by using eye/face protection for procedures that may produce splashes.
- Avoid respiratory exposure by using a biosafety cabinet or other primary containment device and wearing a respirator for procedures that may produce aerosols.
- The use of needles, syringes, and other sharp objects should be strictly limited, and additional precautions should be taken when working with animals.

What should I do if I think I've been exposed to *S. aureus*?

Wash the affected area immediately for 15 minutes with soap and water and seek medical attention.

What symptoms should I look for after a potential exposure?

Animal bites can result in local infections, cellulitis, erythema, tenderness or mild fever. Symptoms of toxic shock syndrome include high fever, vascular collapse, vomiting, diarrhea, myalgia, among others. TSS can cause death within 2 hours.

How long does it take for symptoms to develop?

Onset of symptoms after consuming contaminated food is 30 minutes to 8 hours.

Is there a treatment or vaccine?

Treatment typically involves drainage of the abscesses. Antibiotics may be required for more severe infections. There is no vaccine.

Can I transmit it to other people?

Person to person transmission occurs through contact with a purulent lesion. Individuals in unsanitary and/or crowded community settings are at increased risk.

Can I transmit it to my pets?

Yes, humans can transmit *S. aureus* to pets, livestock, and wildlife. Transmission occurs through direct contact, such as petting, licking, or sharing environments.

Can it survive on surfaces?

Survival ranges from days to months depending on the surface, colony size, and environmental conditions.

See *Pathogen Safety Data Sheet for More Information*

