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Our professional counselors can assist you with:

- **Emotional** concerns
- **Work-related** issues
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- **Chemical** dependency
- **Stress/anxiety/depression**
- **Legal** and financial concerns
- **Elder** care issues

**You can reach LifeWorks Employee Resource with one simple call from anywhere in North America.**

**1.800.577.4727**

*Remember ...*

**Whether it is a work, family, or personal issue, we're here for you.**

LifeWorks Employee Resource  
424 West Superior Street, #600  
Duluth, MN 55802  
218.529.2290  
[www.lifeworkslink.org](http://www.lifeworkslink.org)

## ELDER SOLUTIONS

**A free service for caregivers of older adults.**

To access this service, call 1.800.577.4727 and ask for Elder Solutions. You will receive a Personal Telephone Consultation to assess your caregiving situation and provide referrals to helpful resources.

# Caring ELDER SOLUTIONS

FOR YOUR HEALTH



## How to make sure that a home health care service provides *quality* care.

As with any important purchase, it is always a good idea to talk with friends, neighbors, and your local area agency on aging to learn more about the home health care agencies in your community. In looking for a home health care agency, the following 20 questions can be used to help guide your search:

1. How long has the agency been serving this community?
2. Does the agency have any printed brochures describing the services it offers and how much they cost? If so, get one.
3. Is the agency an approved Medicare provider?
4. Is the quality of care certified by a national accrediting body such as the Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations?
5. Does the agency have a current license to practice (if required in the state where the health care agency is located)?
6. Does the agency offer seniors a "Patients' Bill of Rights" that describes the rights and responsibilities of both the agency and the senior being cared for?
7. Does the agency write a plan of care for the patient (with input from the patient, his or her doctor and family), and update the plan as necessary?
8. Does the care plan outline the patient's course of treatment, describing the specific tasks to be performed by each caregiver?
9. How closely do supervisors oversee care to ensure quality?
10. Will agency caregivers keep family members informed about the kind of care their loved one is getting?

HEALTH CARE continued ►

## MRSA...What is it?

**Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a type of bacteria that is resistant to certain antibiotics.** These antibiotics include methicillin and other more common antibiotics such as oxacillin, penicillin and amoxicillin. Staph infections, including MRSA, occur most frequently among persons in hospitals and healthcare facilities (such as nursing homes and dialysis centers) who have weakened immune systems. They may cause skin infections that look like pimples or boils. Skin infections caused by Staph may be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage.

### What is the difference between colonization and infection?

- **COLONIZATION** means that the organism is present in or on the body but is not causing illness.
- **INFECTION** means that the organism is present and is causing illness.



MRSA continued ►

MAKING LIFE WORK FOR YOU & YOUR FAMILY

# Q & A

**Q:** *"I've been thinking lately about how I'm not getting younger and neither are my parents. I try to avoid thoughts about them needing more help, but I know I can't do that forever. They don't need assistance now, but I don't know how long it will be before they do. When do I (and the rest of my family) need to start making decisions and figuring out a plan of how to deal with things when my parents do need some help?"*

**A:** This is a great question with a short and simple answer: **right now**. Now is the time to start talking with your family members and your parents about what they want and how you are going to handle things once they do reach the point of needing assistance. You're right that this is not a pleasant or easy thing to think about, but things will be so much easier if you start the conversation now. There are numerous resources out there to help start this process. A search of eldercare on the internet will bring forth a plethora of Web sites and resources. A great one for people who are at the beginning of the eldercare process (like you) can be found in the family section of the AARP's web site at [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org). They have an entire section devoted to eldercare, and included in it is a 30-page brochure entitled "Prepare to Care". This brochure outlines five steps for the preparation of caring for elderly family members and is loaded with tips on how to make this process easier. This brochure is highly recommended as a starting point to guide you through the first steps in the journey you are about to embark upon. ■

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**LifeWorks is a free, confidential 24/7 service provided by your employer for you and your family.**

continued ... **MRSA**



**What conditions increase the risk of acquiring these organisms?**

There are several risk factors for both colonization and infection:

- *severity* of illness
- *previous* exposure to antimicrobial agents
- *underlying diseases* or conditions, particularly: chronic renal disease, insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, peripheral vascular disease, dermatitis or skin lesions
- *invasive procedures*, such as: dialysis, presence of invasive devices, urinary catheterization, repeated contact with the healthcare system

**If a patient in a facility is colonized or infected with MRSA, what do their visitors/ family members need to know?**

In general, healthy people are at low risk of getting infected with MRSA. Therefore, casual contact - such as kissing, hugging, and touching - is acceptable. Visitors should wash their hands before leaving an infected person's room. Also, disposable gloves should be worn if contact with body fluids is expected. (If excessive contact with body fluids is expected, gowns should also be worn.) It is also acceptable for infants and children to have casual contact with these patients.

**What precautions should family caregivers take for infected persons in their homes?**

Outside of healthcare settings, there is little risk of transmitting organisms to persons at risk of disease from MRSA, therefore, healthy people are at low risk of getting infected. In the home, the following precautions should be followed:

- ✓ **Wash hands** with soap and water after physical contact with the infected or colonized person and before leaving the home.
- ✓ **Wear disposable gloves** if contact with body fluids is expected and hands should be washed after removing the gloves.
- ✓ **Use towels** for drying hands only once after contact.
- ✓ **Change linens** and wash if they are soiled and on a routine basis.
- ✓ **Clean** patient's environment routinely and when soiled with body fluids.
- ✓ **Notify doctors** and other healthcare personnel who provide care for the patient that the patient is colonized/infected with a multidrug-resistant organism. ■ Adapted from [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

continued ... **HEALTH CARE**

# Caring

11. Are agency staff members available around the clock, seven days a week, if necessary?
12. Does the agency have a nursing supervisor available to provide on-call assistance 24 hours a day?
13. How does the agency ensure patient confidentiality?
14. How are agency caregivers hired and trained?
15. What is the procedure for resolving problems when they occur, and who can you call with questions or complaints?
16. How does the agency handle billing?
17. Is there a sliding fee schedule based on ability to pay, and is financial assistance available to pay for services?
18. Will the agency provide a list of references for its caregivers?
19. Who does the agency call if the home health care worker cannot come when scheduled?
20. What type of employee screening is done? ■

