



## hand hygiene/sterilization

# Ready or not, here I come

**MY FAVORITE GAME IS HIDE AND SEEK.** While I can thrive in various environments, one of my favorite places is the hospital.

I think it is a great spot to build a home and family. There is a lot of room to grow. I have noticed that our community seems to thrive despite the efforts to keep us out of this environment. I don't mind all the attention though, because I can survive for days, weeks, and even months, and in some cases, without much water. I can live on hard and soft surfaces, including hand rails, bed-side tables, bedding, plastics, clothes, counters, and even on people. I do prefer a moist environment though, and I love hot weather—95-degrees F is ideal.

I think that is why I like hospitals so much; there is so much opportunity and space. And there are so many ways to get around the facility.

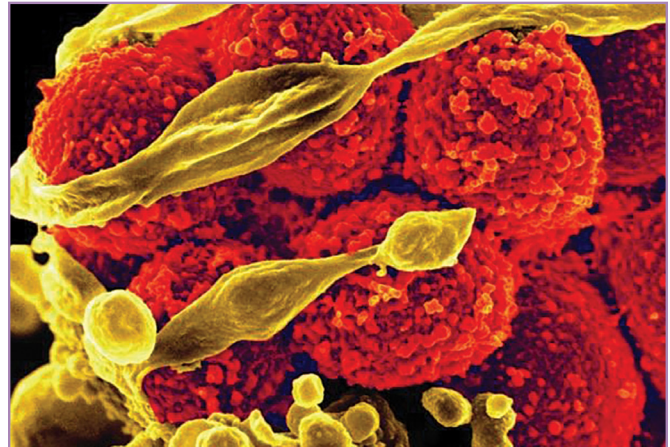
**I recently learned that I can live up to:**

- seven months on dust
- eight weeks on a mop head
- nine weeks on a cotton towel
- 203 days on a blanket
- Indefinitely on skin

In a study (Neely, et al, J Clin Microbiol. 2000 Feb; 38(2): 724-726), the authors state that I can survive for days to months after drying on hospital fabrics and plastics.

So, you probably guessed that I am a species of bacteria, gram positive cocci. I am somewhat unique though. In fact, my ancestors were first discovered in 1961. What didn't kill my ancestors back then, only made me stronger.

When I infect a person, I can manifest as swollen red bumps on the skin. Eventually, the infection progresses, filling with pus, and the patient can become feverish. It doesn't take that long for this kind of infection to turn into an abscess that could require surgical drainage. In other cases, the abscess can be located deep into the body and result in infections in bones, joints, the blood stream, other wounds, heart valves, and even lungs.



Source: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

In hospitals, there are three common risk factors for acquiring this kind of infection, including hospitalization (especially those people with weakened immune systems), medical tubing or other invasive devices, and living in a long-term care facility.

To prevent infections, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) recommends effective hand hygiene, environmental and equipment decontamination, active surveillance, contact precautions for those patients infected by the bacteria, and strategies and best practices to prevent transmission through invasive devices like central venous catheter or ventilator.

Just remember that my power is magnified exponentially when I get into a host's body. It is hard to stop me, and there are only a few ways to do it.

Who am I?

ICT

Methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus



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