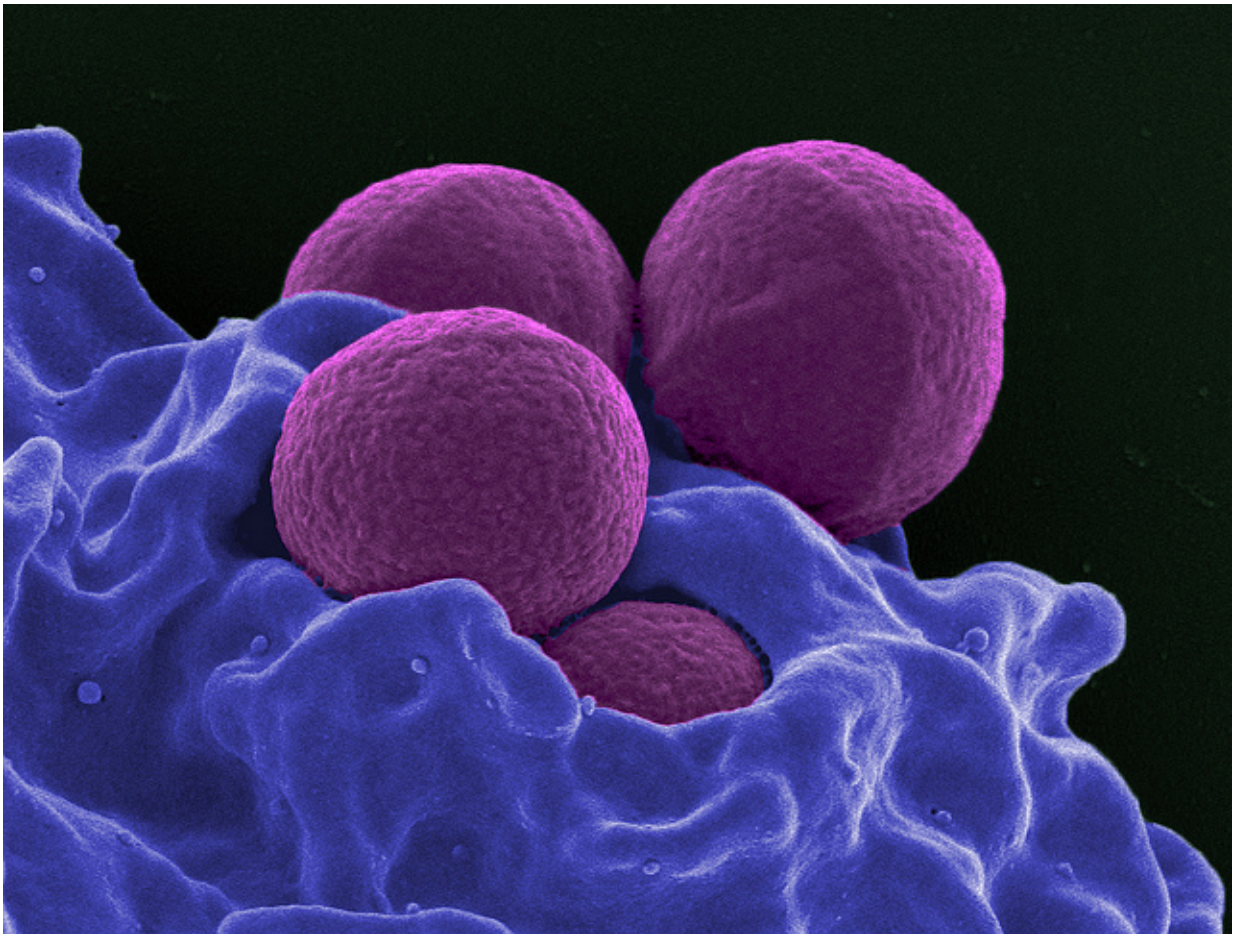


Common antimicrobials help patients recover from MRSA abscesses

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MRSA bacteria, like those shown here, are present both in hospitals and the environment at large, and can cause difficult-to-treat skin infections. Credit: NIAID

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) bacteria are resistant to multiple antibiotics and commonly cause skin infections that can lead to more serious or life-threatening infection in other parts of the body. In new findings published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, researchers found that two common, inexpensive antimicrobials can help patients heal from MRSA skin abscesses. The findings suggest that current treatment options for MRSA still have a role, even as scientists continue to search for new antimicrobial products. The research was funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), a part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The study was conducted at hospitals across the United States and involved 796 children and adults with small, uncomplicated [skin](#) abscesses. All patients had their abscesses opened and drained as part of standard MRSA treatment. The patients were then sorted into three groups, each of which received a different, ten-day oral treatment regimen. One group received clindamycin, a second group received trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (TMP-SMX), and the third group received placebo.

The group treated with clindamycin had an 81.7 percent cure rate, and the group that received TMP-SMX had an 84.6 percent cure rate. The placebo [group](#) had a 62.9 percent cure rate. According to the researchers, the findings contradict a commonly held belief that antimicrobial treatment is little better than doing nothing for MRSA skin infections. It corroborates the findings of [another NIAID-funded study](#) demonstrating that TMP-SMX treatment resulted in better clinical outcomes than placebo for MRSA skin abscesses, and also upholds [other findings](#) that both clindamycin and TMP-SMX are equally beneficial in treating MRSA skin infections.

The researchers note, however, that the side effects of clindamycin and

TMP-SMX (including nausea, diarrhea, and possible new *Clostridium difficile* infections) can be severe. In addition, some strains of *Staphylococcus* are resistant to [clindamycin](#). The authors recommend that healthcare providers weigh the risks but not dismiss these antimicrobials out of hand as viable treatment options for MRSA skin abscesses.

More information: Robert S. Daum et al, A Placebo-Controlled Trial of Antibiotics for Smaller Skin Abscesses, *New England Journal of Medicine* (2017). [DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa1607033](https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa1607033)

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