

Infection Control - Skin Infections – MRSA and Staph Infections

To prepare for the potential occurrence of methicillin-resistant staph aureus (MRSA) in a student during the school year, the District is in consultation with the Walworth County Public Health Department on this issue as needed. Many people may have heard about MRSA, or the “super bug” in the news as being an emerging infection control issue that is becoming more frequent in school aged children, and in particular, athletes. We want to give you information about staph and skin infections so you, as a parent, know what to look for and what precautions you and your family can take. As a normal daily procedure, District custodians disinfect all commonly used surfaces with a hospital grade disinfectant. “Super cleaning” of the bathrooms, classrooms and common areas have occurred routinely during this school year as a preventative measure when we have been informed of any cases of staph. Posters have gone up to encourage students to wash their hands and to keep any cut or wound “clean, dry and covered.” MRSA is not required by law to be reported to schools but we are requesting that a doctors’ note stating MRSA be provided to the school so that we can track any cases that occur.

If your child has a skin infection or rash: If the infection or rash does not seem to be clearing, you are strongly encouraged to call your health care provider and tell them of the situation as soon as possible. Please cover all cuts, abrasions and rashes with a Band-Aid or dressing before coming to school. Students with lesions, sores or rashes that are red, swollen, or draining fluid will be excluded from participating in PE or recess sports that have skin-to-skin contact unless there is a doctors’ release.

What is MRSA?

MRSA is a type of Staph bacteria. It is estimated that 30 percent of the population carries staph on the skin or in the nose. About one percent of those persons with staph have a type of staph resistant to the antibiotic called methicillin-resistant staph aureus (MRSA). Staph may cause skin infections that look like pimples, boils, abscesses or cellulites. Skin infections caused by staph may be red, swollen, painful or have pus or other drainage. Lesions may be misdiagnosed as “spider bites.” If left untreated, staph can cause severe illness. Although MRSA is resistant to some antibiotics, there are still several antibiotics that can be used to treat it.

Who can get Staph?

Anyone can get a staph infection. Staph typically enters a body through a cut or break in the skin. People are more likely to get a staph infection if they have:

- Skin-to-skin contact with someone who has a staph infection.
- Contact with items and surfaces that have staph on them.
- Openings in their skin such as cuts or scrapes that are not covered by a bandage.

How can I prevent Staph?

Students and family members should take the following precautions to help prevent skin

infections:

- Encourage frequent hand washing with soap and warm water.
- If cuts or breaks in the skin do occur, the area needs to be cleaned with soap and water and covered with a bandage or clean, dry dressing.
- Keep open or draining sores and lesions clean (washed with soap and water) and covered, especially at school.
- Encourage to keep their fingernails clean and clipped short.
- Avoid contact with other people's infections or anything contaminated by an infection (bandages).
- Avoid sharing personal items such as soap bars, towels, deodorant, make-up, or razors that directly touches the body.
- Wash dirty clothes, linens, and towels in hot water and laundry detergent. Using a hot dryer rather than air-drying, also helps kill bacteria.
- Clean and disinfect sport uniforms and sports equipment before use if items are shared.
- Encourage student who participate in contact sports to shower after each practice, game or match and to wash uniforms daily.
 - Discourage cosmetic shaving. Shaving opens the skin to allow bacteria in.

What can I do as a parent?

- Check your family for signs and symptoms of staph infections (see above.)
- If you or any family members exhibit symptoms described above, please contact your health care provider because early treatment is important.
- Notify the school if you child has been diagnosed with a staph infection or MRSA skin infection.
- If your child has been given antibiotics, it is extremely important for them to take the antibiotics for the full time they were prescribed, even if the infection appears to be going away.
- If you or your child is taking antibiotic for a skin infection and the infection does not seem to be clearing, you are strongly encouraged to call your doctor and tell them of the situation as soon as possible.

For further questions, please call Wendy Zimmerman, Elkhorn Area School Nurse, at 262-723-3160 ext. 1610. For more information on MRSA, contact the Walworth County Public Health Department or cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_in_schools.html