

MRSA Information for School Staff

Several cases of **Methicillin-resistant staphylococcus infection (MRSA)** have been reported recently in the news. The Monroe County Health Department reports that Staphylococcus aureus or Staph is the most common form of skin infection. 25-30% of us carry Staph without being sick. Staph can enter the body through breaks in the skin and sometimes cause infection.

MRSA is a type of Staph infection that is resistant to common antibiotics. It is, however, treatable with other antibiotics. Most serious MRSA infections occur in the hospital setting when the organism invades the bloodstream. The main ways to prevent staph infection are to wash hands and care for wounds properly. Most cases in the community are skin infections such as a boil.

Significant skin-to-skin contact is required to transmit Staph. It does not spread through the air and is rarely transmitted in the environment. It is uncommon to close a school because of MRSA. Following good infection control practices such as good hand hygiene, covering cuts and scrapes, and not sharing personal items such as towels and razors is typically all that is needed.

What you can do:

- Observe children for open wounds. If any are draining or contain pus, refer the child to the school nurse. The only way to determine if an infection is caused by MRSA is through laboratory testing ordered by a physician or other health care provider.
- Encourage hand washing before eating and after toileting.
- Coaches should ensure that athletes wash their hands, cover their wounds, and not share personal items and towels.
- Remind students who participate in sporting events to wash their hands after each practice and game. They should not share equipment, uniforms, towels, or other personal items.

Know what to watch for:

Mild infections may look like a spider bite, pimple or boil and can be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. Infections which get worse, or are not healing should be evaluated by a health care professional.

Controlling the Spread

- Hand washing for at least 20 seconds is the best way to reduce the spread of communicable diseases.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol concentration.
- Students with skin infections may need to be referred to a licensed health care provider for diagnosis and treatment. Staph can enter the body through breaks in the skin infection.
- The main ways to prevent staph infection are to wash hands and care for wounds properly.
- Students or staff members, infected with MRSA, do not need to be routinely excluded from the classroom. Individuals with open wounds should keep them covered with clean, dry bandages that completely cover the wound.
- Exclusion from school should be reserved for those with wound drainage that cannot be covered and contained with a clean, dry dressing taped on all 4 sides.
- Gloves should be worn if you expect to have contact with non-intact skin or body fluids. Hands should be washed immediately after removing gloves.
- Contact your custodian for advice on cleaning classroom surfaces. There are specific cleaners which are effective against communicable diseases.

Further information about MRSA can be found at:

Monroe County Health Department

<http://www.monroecounty.gov/health-index.php>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/MRSAinSchools>

http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/home_work_school.htm