

Staph and MRSA Fact Sheet

How Staph, including MRSA, are Spread

Staph, including MRSA (Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*), are spread by direct skin-to-skin contact, such as shaking hands, wrestling, or other direct contact with the skin of another person. Staph also are spread by contact with items that have been touched by people with staph. This could include towels shared after bathing and drying off, or shared athletic equipment in the gym or on the field.

Staph infections start when staph get into a cut, scrape or other break in the skin. If you have a skin infection — painful, swollen pimples, boils, and rashes, for example — you should be very careful to avoid spreading your infection to others.

How can Staph/MRSA Infections be Prevented at School?

It is important for school healthcare professionals to coordinate infection control efforts with the athletics department, residential services, and other colleagues at the school to effectively prevent and control infections such as MRSA. **To prevent MRSA infections at the school, consider these guidelines:**

1. Regular hand washing is the best way to prevent getting and spreading staph/MRSA. Encourage and practice hand washing.
2. Practice and encourage good skin care. Since staph infections start when staph enter the body through a break in the skin, keeping skin healthy and intact is an important preventative measure.
3. Ensure access to sinks, soap and clean towels.
4. Ensure the availability of alcohol-based hand sanitizers, if soap and water are not accessible.
5. Encourage daily showers with soap and water.
6. Discourage sharing of personal items such as towels, razors and toothbrushes.
7. Regularly clean sinks, showers and toilets by saturating with disinfectant.
8. Disinfect athletic equipment between users.
9. Launder sheets, towels, sports uniforms, and underclothing with hot water and detergent, and dry on the hottest setting.
10. Wear gloves when handling dirty laundry.

11. Wear gloves when caring for another person's wounds, and protect clothing from touching wounds or bandages.
12. Encourage those infected to always keep draining lesions covered with dressings.
13. Dispose of dressings containing pus and blood carefully.
14. Disinfect contaminated portable equipment such as stethoscopes, blood-pressure cuffs, equipment handles, tourniquets, pagers, and cell phones.
15. Follow routine procedures for cleaning the environment. In general, use routine procedures with a freshly prepared solution of commercially available cleaner such as detergent, disinfectant-detergent or chemical germicide.

School Attendance

Students and staff with a MRSA infection can attend school regularly as long as the wound is covered and they are receiving proper treatment. Students and staff do not need to be isolated or sent home in the middle of the day if a suspected staph or MRSA infection is noticed. Wash the area with soap and water and cover it lightly. Those who touch the wound should wash their hands immediately. The student should be encouraged to have the wound looked at by their healthcare provider as soon as possible to confirm a MRSA infection and determine the best course of treatment. The wound should be kept lightly covered until it has dried completely.

For Additional Information

Contact your local health department or visit the following Web sites:

http://www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/gcdc/ca_mrsa/ca_mrsa.html

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_ca_posters.html#Athletic