

Information for Parents and Schools on Community-Associated Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (CA-MRSA)

What is *Staphylococcus aureus* (staph)?

Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to as “staph,” are bacteria frequently found on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Staph bacteria are the most common cause of skin infections in the United States. Most of these skin infections are minor (such as pimples and boils) and can be treated without antibiotics.

What is MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)?

MRSA is a type of staph bacteria that is resistant to some common antibiotics. MRSA has been present for a long time in hospitals and health care facilities. However, the community strain of MRSA (CA-MRSA) is now the most common cause of skin infections in many communities in the U.S., including many communities in West Virginia.

What does a staph or MRSA infection look like?

Staph bacteria, including MRSA, can cause skin infections that may look like a pimple or boil and can be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. More serious infections may include pneumonia, bloodstream infections, surgical wound infections or other deep infections.

How people get a staph or MRSA infection?

MRSA is transmitted most frequently by direct skin-to-skin contact. You can protect yourself from infections by practicing good hygiene; covering any open skin area such as abrasions or cuts with a clean dry bandage; avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors; using a barrier between your skin and shared equipment; and wiping surfaces of equipment before and after use.

How can staph or MRSA skin infections be prevented?

There are many things that we can do to prevent the spread of MRSA in our schools and our communities. Good personal hygiene is one of the most important ways to prevent MRSA infection.

General Recommendations for Prevention for the Spread of MRSA in Schools:

- Avoid unnecessary antibiotic use. Antibiotic overuse causes antibiotic resistance.
- Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid sharing personal and skin care items such as clothing, towels, washcloths, razors or lotions and balms.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed. Avoid contact with other people’s wounds or bandages, and wash hands immediately after changing a bandage.
- Seek medical attention immediately if a wound does not heal properly or appears to be infected.
- MRSA is spread by people and shared personal items. It is not spread through the walls and floor of the school building. Schools do not need to be closed to control the spread of MRSA, and “fogging” is wasteful and ineffective. Routine cleaning of frequently-touched surfaces, bathrooms, locker rooms, kitchens, classrooms and other shared areas is recommended according to usual procedures.

Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology

350 Capitol Street, Room 125, Charleston, WV 25301-3715

Phone: 304.558.5358 Fax: 304.558.6335 www.wvdeop.org

October 2010

Information for Parents and Schools on Community-Associated Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (CA-MRSA)

Use an EPA-registered disinfectant effective against MRSA:

<http://epa.gov/oppad001/chemregindex.htm>

- People with MRSA or other skin infections can go to work or school if their wound is covered and the drainage is contained.

Recommendations for Athletic Environments:

- Cover all wounds. If wound cannot be covered, exclude the player with the wound.
- Shower with soap after every practice or tournament. Use liquid soap dispensers in the team showers.
- Discourage sharing of towels and personal items such as clothing or equipment.
- Wash uniforms, clothes, towels, and sheets with water and laundry detergent after each use. Dry clothes in a hot dryer.
- Lockers, benches, showers, weight benches and other shared surfaces in athletic training facilities should be sanitized on a regular basis using disinfectant cleaners.

A list of EPA-registered disinfectants effective against MRSA is available at:

<http://epa.gov/oppad001/chemregindex.htm>. Of course, 10% bleach, freshly mixed, is a highly effective disinfectant.

- Train coaches in first aid for wounds and encourage athletes to report wounds to them.

Are staph and MRSA infections treatable?

Yes. Most staph and MRSA infections are treatable. Warm soaks and incision and drainage ('lancing') are the basis for treatment of simple skin infections. If an antibiotic is prescribed, be sure to take the medication as prescribed, even if the infection is getting better. Do not share antibiotics with other people or save unfinished antibiotics to use at another time. Remember that many staph skin infections may be treated by draining the abscess or boil and may not require antibiotics in healthy people. Consult your doctor for advice.

Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology

350 Capitol Street, Room 125, Charleston, WV 25301-3715

Phone: 304.558.5358 Fax: 304.558.6335 www.wvdeh.org

October 2010