

Information Regarding MRSA

Many parents are concerned about recent news accounts concerning methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), a type of "staph" infection that can cause skin infections that may be difficult to treat. The District's normal practices for cleaning facilities and encouraging regular hand washing are the most effective precautions. We are assisting the Ohio Department of Health with education efforts by sharing some of the agency's answers to frequently asked questions about MRSA:

What are typical symptoms of MRSA?

Common signs of a skin infection include redness, warmth, swelling, and tenderness. Often a MRSA infection will look like a spider bite, boil, abscess or pimple. If left untreated, it could progress into a more serious illness.

How is MRSA spread?

In outbreak situations, the environment has not played a significant role in the transmission of MRSA. Studies in health care and community settings show skin-to-skin contact, direct contact with infected wound drainage or contact with contaminated surfaces or things such as sports equipment as the likely sources of transmission. MRSA skin infections are not spread through the air.

How can students protect themselves?

Students can protect themselves from infections by:

- Practicing good hygiene (e.g., keeping their hands clean by washing with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rubs, and showering after games and practices);
- Covering any open skin areas such as abrasions or cuts with clean dry bandages; not sharing personal items such as towels or razors;
- Using barriers (e.g., clothing or towels) between skin and shared equipment;
- If they have open wounds, NOT using whirlpools, hydrotherapy pools, cold tubs, swimming pools, and other common tubs;
- Wiping surfaces of equipment before and after use; and
- Getting tested if they think they may have MRSA.

We share your concerns about the health and safety of our students. Please learn as much as you can about MRSA, be aware of possible symptoms, and seek medical attention promptly if needed. For more specific information about this infection, please visit the Ohio Department of Health's web site at: www.odh.ohio.gov.