

PREVENTION OF MRSA

(methicillin- resistant STAPHYLOCOCCUS aureus)
and other communicable diseases

Basic Information:

MRSA is a bacterial infection (not a virus) surfacing in schools and other settings. MRSA is the abbreviation for methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus. It is primarily a skin infection often resembling a pimple, boil or spider bite at its onset. It quickly worsens into an abscess or pus filled blister or sore and becomes serious when it enters the blood stream. This lesion should not be squeezed or drained as this can spread the infection to other parts of the skin or deeper into the body via the bloodstream.

The vast majority of MRSA infections have historically occurred within hospital settings. However, up to 15% occur in the community among otherwise healthy people. This population includes those who are prone to cuts and scrapes particularly children and athletes.

How is MRSA communicated?

MRSA spreads by skin to skin contact, crowded conditions and the sharing of personal items.

Who is at risk?

1. Those who have regular contact with patients in hospitals, nursing homes, or have recently been discharged with MRSA.
2. Those who have regular contact with health care workers.
3. Those who have recently taken antibiotics such as fluoroquinolone or cephalosporin.
4. Men who have sex with men.
5. The misuse or overuse of antibiotics allows bacteria to evolve and develop resistance to drugs. Antibiotics should be taken only when necessary and patients should take the full course of medication as prescribed by their physician.
6. Scrapes and sores must be kept clean and bandaged until healed – minor cuts and scrapes are the way MRSA takes hold.
7. People who have sores that will not heal or that are filled with pus should see a physician and request a test for staph infection.

How can MRSA be prevented?

Parents, children, and teenagers (particularly athletes) must be instructed as to the following facts:

- Personal items should not be shared. This includes water bottles and any other containers also brushes, combs, razors, lip balm, towels, makeup, cell phones and musical instruments.
- Musical instruments, particularly those that are shared, must have a strict and enforceable policy and procedure for cleaning the instruments in place in all schools.
- Staph grows rapidly in warm, moist environments. Extra vigilance should be exercised in gyms and health clubs.
- Equipment in gyms should be wiped down using equal parts of bleach and water.

THE VERY MOST IMPORTANT PREVENTIVE MEASURE IS ALWAYS
HAND WASHING

WASH HANDS – WASH HANDS – WASH HANDS THOROUGHLY

Have ready access to a hand sanitizer (Purell is an example) in an antibacterial form, either lotion, wipes or liquid.

Are infected cases reportable?

People who are infected are permitted to attend school as long as they are compliant with infection control measures.

At this time, the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services does not recommend parent notification for isolated cases. The Wyckoff Board of Health will urge the State of New Jersey public health officials to establish a reporting system that will ensure tracking of risks and a means of epidemiological investigation to reduce spread.

For further information you may contact the Northwest Bergen Regional Health Commission at 201-445-7217 or at the following web site: www.nwbrhc.org