

Information About Staphylococcus Aureus - Drug-Resistant Staph

Dear Parents,

Each student's health is a priority to HIES. Because of this, we would like to pass on critical information regarding Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA). It has been discussed in the media recently as a "staph outbreak."

What is Staphylococcus aureus?

Staph is one of the most common causes of skin infections in the U.S. and is usually found on the skin or in the noses of healthy people. This is called colonization. The majority of Staph infections are minor (pimples and boils). Staph can also cause more serious infections such as (surgical) wound infections, blood-stream infections and pneumonia that require special antibiotics for treatment.

How can I prevent MRSA infection?

- ✓ Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water.
- ✓ Avoid contact with other people's wounds or anything contaminated by pus.
- ✓ Avoid sharing personal items such as razors, towels, uniforms, and sports equipment that directly touch your body.
- ✓ Clean and disinfect objects (such as gym and sports equipment) before use.
- ✓ Wash dirty clothes, linens, and towels with hot water, laundry detergent and 2-3 teaspoons of bleach. Using a hot dryer, rather than air-drying, also helps kill bacteria.
- ✓ Avoid using unnecessary antibiotics.

What does an MRSA infection look like?

- ✓ It is often misdiagnosed as a spider bite.
- ✓ Symptoms may include redness, warmth, swelling, pus, skin tenderness, pimples, boils, and/or blisters.
- ✓ MRSA-infection skin lesions (sores) can change from skin or surface irritations to abscesses or serious skin infections.
- ✓ If left untreated, MRSA can infect blood and bones.

How is MRSA spread?

- ✓ MRSA lives on skin and survives on objects and surfaces for more than 24 hours.
- ✓ Drainage (pus) from skin sores can spread bacteria to other body parts or to other people.
- ✓ MRSA infections can be spread in places where there are crowds of people that come in close contact with each other such as schools, gyms, and sports activities.
- ✓ MRSA is almost always spread by direct physical contact.
- ✓ MRSA is also spread through touching objects such as towels, sheets, workout areas and sports equipment that have MRSA germs on them.

How do I know for sure that I have MRSA?

Only a doctor or healthcare provider can make the diagnosis after getting laboratory test results. A laboratory test called a culture is done by collecting a small sample of the infected wound.

Once the staph germs are growing, they are tested to see which antibiotics will be effective for treating the infection. If the Staph germs cannot be killed with standard antibiotics then the infection is called MRSA.

What kind of treatment can I get for my MRSA infection?

Many MRSA infections can be treated by draining the abscess or boil and may not require antibiotics. Only healthcare providers should drain sores. Always keep draining sores covered to prevent others from getting sick. Most MRSA infections are treatable with antibiotics. If your case is severe, you may need very strong antibiotics that can only be given in a hospital.

If you or your child has symptoms as described above, you are encouraged to contact your family doctor. For additional information regarding community acquired Staph infections “CA-MRSA” visit www.health.state.ga.us.

Thank you,

Tammy Green, RN, BSN (Lower/Middle School Nurse)

Kaki Scroggins, RN, BSN (Pre-School/Upper School Nurse)