



ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Preventing MRSA Infections

Guidelines for Schools

MRSA is a kind of staphylococcus aureus (staph) bacterium that presents as a topical skin infection that appears red and swollen and typically resembles a pimple. It is resistant to betalactam antibiotics including methicillin, oxacillin, penicillin, and amoxicillin. There are other antibiotics available that can effectively treat MRSA. The risk for transmission for MRSA is much greater among sports participants than among students in a classroom. Physical contact with an infected person poses the highest risk.

To prevent MRSA infections at school, consider these guidelines:

- Regular hand washing with non-bar soap is the best way to prevent getting and spreading staph/MRSA. Encourage and practice hand hygiene.
- Practice and encourage good skin care. Since staph infections start when staph enters the body through a break in the skin, keeping skin healthy and intact is an important preventative measure.
- Ensure access to sinks, soaps, and clean towels.
- Ensure the availability of alcohol-based hand sanitizers, if soap and water are not accessible.
- Encourage daily showers with soap and water.
- Discourage sharing of personal items such as towels, razors, topical preparations (lotions, deodorants) and toothbrushes.
- Regularly clean sinks, showers, and toilets by saturating with disinfectant.
- Disinfect athletic equipment between users.
- Wear gloves when handling dirty laundry from sports related activities.
- Launder sheets, towels, sports uniforms, and underclothing with hot water and detergent, and dry on the hottest setting.
- Wear gloves when caring for another person's wounds, and protect clothing from touching wounds or bandages.
- Encourage those infected to always keep draining lesions covered with dressings.
- Dispose of dressings containing pus and blood carefully.
- Disinfect contaminated portable equipment such as stethoscopes, blood-pressure cuffs, equipment handles, tourniquets, pagers, and cell phones.

What should I do if a student in my school is reported to have MRSA?

Consider taking the following steps:

- **Confirm the diagnosis.** This may require contacting the doctor and family of the student to ensure that accurate medical information is available.
- **Follow routine infection control precautions.** Use the following infection control precautions with a student who has MRSA infection:
 - Wear gloves when handling the student, or touching blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions, and any items contaminated with these fluids. Gloves should be used before touching mucous membranes and non-intact skin. Gloves should be removed after use, and hand washing performed before touching non-contaminated items and environmental surfaces and before tending to another student.
 - Linens (e.g., from cots) that may contain blood, secretions, or excretions should be handled in a manner to prevent skin, mucous membrane and clothing exposure.
- **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.