

MRSA

In Schools

MRSA

- **Advice for Parents**
- **Advice for Teachers**
- **Advice for School Health Personnel**

Practical Advice for Teachers

- If you observe children with open draining wounds or infections, refer them to the school nurse.
- Enforce hand hygiene with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers before eating and after using the bathroom.

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The Sonoma County Department of Health Services has recently produced a brochure addressing the issue of Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus. This brochure can be accessed at the Public Health Department website: <http://www.sonoma-county.org/health/ph/diseasecontrol/mrsa/index.htm>

In light of a heightened awareness regarding this topic, Public Health was invited to present an article for your school newsletter.



The information below was adapted from a publication found through The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) titled, "Questions and Answers about Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) in Schools." www.cdc.gov/Features/MRSAinSchools/

The CDC along with parents and school officials wants to do everything possible to protect students from MRSA skin infections. These are commonly asked questions that will help parents and school officials prevent the spread of MRSA in schools.

What types of infections does MRSA cause?

In the community most MRSA infections are skin infections that may appear as pustules or boils which often are red, swollen, painful, and may have pus or other drainage. These skin infections commonly occur at

sites of visible skin trauma, such as cuts and abrasions, and areas of the body covered by hair (e.g., back of neck, groin, buttock, armpit, beard of men).

Almost all MRSA skin infections can be effectively treated by drainage of pus with or without antibiotics. More serious infections, such as pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or bone infections, are very rare in healthy people who get MRSA skin infections.

How is MRSA transmitted?

MRSA is usually transmitted by direct skin-to-skin contact or contact with shared items or surfaces that have come into contact with someone else's infection (e.g., towels, or used bandages).

In what settings do MRSA skin infections occur?

MRSA skin infections can occur anywhere. Some settings have factors that make it easier for MRSA to be transmitted. These factors, referred to as the 5C's are as follows:

- Compromised skin (such as cuts or abrasions)
- Contact (frequent skin-to-skin)
- Contact with Contaminated items and surfaces
- Difficulty keeping skin Clean or not Cleaning skin after a cut or abrasion

Common areas where the 5C's can be found include schools, dormitories, military barracks, households, correctional facilities, and daycare centers.

Advice for School Health Personnel:

- Students with skin infections may need to be referred to a licensed healthcare provider for diagnosis and treatment. School health personnel should notify parents/guardians when skin infections are suspected.
- Use standard precautions (hand hygiene and gloves) when caring for non-intact skin or potential infections.



- Use barriers such as gowns, masks and eye protection if splashing of body fluids is anticipated.

How do I protect myself from getting MRSA?

You can protect yourself by doing the following:

- Practice good hand hygiene (e.g., keep your hands clean by washing with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and shower immediately after participating in exercise).
- Cover skin trauma such as abrasions or cuts with a clean dry bandage until healed.
- Avoid sharing personal items (e.g., towels, razors) that come into contact with your bare skin; and use a barrier (e.g., clothing or a towel between your skin and shared equipment such as weight-training benches).
- Maintain a clean environment by establishing cleaning procedures for frequently touched surfaces and other surfaces that come into direct contact with people's skin.



Should schools close because of an MRSA infection?

What about closing to disinfect a school?

- The decision to close a school for any communicable disease should be made by school officials in consultation with local public health officials. However, in most cases it is not necessary to close schools due to an MRSA infection in a student. It is important to note that MRSA transmission can be prevented by simple measures such as hand hygiene and covering infections.
- It is rarely necessary to close a school to disinfect when MRSA infections occur. MRSA skin infections are transmitted primarily by skin-to-skin contact and contact with surfaces that are likely to come into contact with uncovered or poorly covered infections.
- Cleaning surfaces with detergent-based cleaners or EPA registered disinfectants is effective in removing MRSA from the environment. A list of EPA products that are effective against MRSA are listed at: <http://epa.gov/oppad001/chemregindex.htm>

Should the entire school community be notified of every MRSA infection?

- Usually, it is not necessary to inform the entire school community about a single MRSA infection. When an MRSA infection occurs within the school population, the school nurse should determine whether some or all students, parents and staff should be notified. Consultation with the local public health authorities should be used to guide this decision.

Should the school be notified that my child has an MRSA infection?

- Consult with your school about its policy for notification of skin infections.

Should students with MRSA skin infections be excluded from attending school?

- Students with MRSA infections should not be excluded from attending school, unless directed by a physician.

If you have an MRSA infection, here's how you can prevent spreading it to others:

- **Cover your wound.** Keep wounds that are draining or have pus covered with clean, dry bandages until healed. Follow your doctor's instructions on proper care of the wound. Pus from infected wounds can contain bacteria or germs, including MRSA, so keeping the infection covered will help prevent the spread to others.
- **Clean your hands frequently.** You, your family, and others you have close contact with should wash their hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after changing the bandage or touching the infected wound.
- **Do not share personal items.** Avoid sharing towels, washcloths, razors, clothing or uniforms that may have had contact with the infected wound or bandage. Wash sheets, towels, and clothes that become soiled in laundry detergent and use a dryer to dry clothes completely.

~ Cover your wound

~ Clean your hands frequently

~ Do not share personal items



For Further Information

www.sonoma-county.org/mrsa

www.cdc.gov/Features/MRSAinSchools/

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo/discond/Documents/MRSAParentsGuide.pdf>

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo/discond/Documents/SpanishMRSAParentsGuide.pdf>

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo/discond/Documents/07MRSAschool.pdf>

