

# Methicillin-Resistant Staph Aureus (MRSA) Prevention in MCPS Recommendations for the School Community

## Background and General Information

Staphylococcus (Staph) aureus is a bacterium that is commonly found on the skin or in the nose. People can have “staph” living on the skin or nose and have no symptoms. This is called being “colonized.” The bacteria enter the body through a break in the skin, a cut, or abrasion and then infect, causing symptoms. Methicillin-Resistant Staph Aureus (MRSA) is a staph infection that does not respond to the more commonly used antibiotics. There are some MRSA strains acquired in the community that suggest it may spread more easily or cause severe disease. Additional studies are under way in this area. However, prevention of skin infections in general is important.

MRSA is more difficult to treat if found to be the cause of a skin infection. Infections of the skin such as MRSA most commonly look like an infected pimple or boil and can worsen to include redness, warmth, swelling, pain, and drainage. It can be mistaken as a spider or insect bite. MRSA is spread by skin-to-skin contact, contact with drainage from the nose of a person infected or colonized, or contact with contaminated objects such as razors, soap, clothing, or towels.

### Guiding Principles Provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to Prevent Staphylococcal Skin Infections

- Cover all wounds. If a wound cannot be covered adequately, consider excluding players with potentially infectious skin lesions from practice or competitions until the lesions are healed or can be covered adequately. Players with any draining wound should not participate.
- Encourage good hygiene, including showering and washing with soap and water after all practices and competitions.
- Ensure availability of adequate soap and hot water.
- Discourage sharing of towels and personal items, such as clothing or equipment.
- Establish routine cleaning schedules for shared equipment.
- Train athletes and coaches in first aid for wounds and recognition of wounds that are potentially infected.
- Encourage athletes to report skin lesions to coaches.

### Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Recommendations for MCPS to Prevent Spread of MRSA

For Students/Athletes/Coaches/Staff:

- A most important defense against MRSA and other infections is handwashing. Liquid soap and water and/or alcohol based hand gels should be used.
- Students/Athletes/Coaches/Staff are advised to shower as soon as reasonably possible following practice or games, especially after direct contact sports. Individuals are expected to use commonly found soap; liquid is preferred.
- All cuts and abrasions must be washed well at the time of injury and 3 to 4 times a day thereafter until healed. If signs of infection develop, the student should see his/her physician.
- There should be no sharing of personal items such as towels, washcloths, bar soaps, clothing, lotion, razors, uniforms, equipment, etc.
- Parents or guardians should be alert to signs of infection and encourage showering at home.
- Uniforms/gym clothing should be properly washed after use according to label instructions.

- Protective equipment, such as pads, are issued to individual users, not shared, and should be wiped with a disinfectant or cleaner after use.
- Exercise equipment surface areas should be wiped down, using an MCPS approved disinfectant. Individuals should do so prior to using the equipment.
- Barriers, such as clothing or towels, should be used between skin and shared equipment. Users should wear shirts/shorts between skin and hard surfaces, such as benches or exercise seats.
- Suspicious skin lesions should be reported to the coach, school nurse, or administrator and evaluated by a doctor. Prompt recognition and treatment can prevent severe infections.
- Any student observed to have a non-draining, dry, or healed MRSA lesion is to keep the lesion covered at all times during play or practice.
- There should be no sports participation for those athletes with any lesion until no drainage is present or the area can be covered securely with a bandage and preferably a uniform.
- Students in Physical Education (PE) classes with direct contact, high activity sports are encouraged to either shower or wash after class.

#### For the Classroom:

- Students or employees with MRSA do not need to be routinely excluded from the classroom.
- Students with a draining wound should keep the area covered with a clean, dry dressing.
- All lesions should be covered at all times.
- Students should not share personal items that come in contact with the skin, including but not limited to clothing, blankets, towels, bar soap, and lotions.

#### For the Environment:

- Facilities and equipment should be kept clean using a disinfectant on the MCPS approved supply list. Daily cleaning is ideal. This includes cleaning the benches in locker rooms.
- Exercise Equipment—frequently touched contact surface areas on the exercise equipment should be wiped down by the athlete/student/user prior to use.

#### Summary

MRSA is most frequently spread from person-to-person by direct skin-to-skin contact with an infected person. It is located on the hands, skin, in infected wounds, and certain body fluids. These are important factors to understand so that MRSA infections are prevented and not spread. Maintaining good hygiene, frequent handwashing, and avoiding contact with drainage from skin lesions are the best methods to prevent spread of staphylococcal skin infections.

#### References:

MMWR, August 22, 2003/52(33):793-795 Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus Infections Among Competitive Sports Participants—Colorado, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Los Angeles County, 2000–2003.

CDC Community-Associated MRSA. Information for the Public FAQs 2/3/05.

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services  
Public Health Services: Disease Control Program and School Health Services