October 31, 2007

Dear School and Child Care Center Parents, Students, and Staff:

You may have heard or seen the recent media coverage concerning MRSA or methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* infections in school aged children. We would like to take this opportunity to provide you with some information about MRSA and most importantly, how to help prevent and control the spread of these infections.

*Staphylococcus aureus*, often referred to simply as "staph," is a bacterium that is commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Approximately 30% of the population is colonized (when bacteria are present, but not causing an infection) in the nose with staph bacteria. Sometimes, staph can cause an infection. Most infections caused by staph are skin infections, such as pimples or boils. Staph skin infections can be red, painful, swollen, or have pus or other drainage. While approximately 30% of the population is colonized with staph, approximately 1% is colonized with MRSA, a type of staph that is resistant to antibiotics called beta-lactams. Most staph and MRSA infections are treatable with alternative antibiotics. Individuals who believe they may have a staph infection or MRSA infection should contact their physician for evaluation and appropriate treatment.

Practicing good hygiene is one of the most important things that everyone can do to control and prevent the spread of staph and other infections:

- Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people’s wounds or bandages.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, razors, and water bottles.

Students participating in contact sports or other activities that lead to close skin to skin contact should take additional precautions related to skin infections and hygiene:

- Do not share towels, clothing or uniforms.
- Do not store wet, dirty clothing in lockers.
- Avoid sharing personal equipment.
- Keep equipment clean. Follow coach’s directions about cleaning the equipment.
- Keep cuts, abrasions and wounds covered with clean, dry bandages. Athletes with draining wounds or infections should not be allowed to participate in practices or games until the wound has stopped draining.
- Report any cuts, abrasions or wounds to the coach and school nurse.

For more information about MRSA and how to prevent it: [http://www.cdc.gov/Features/MRSAinschools/](http://www.cdc.gov/Features/MRSAinschools/)

Sincerely,

Ellen Correll
Superintendent

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