

MRSA (Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus)

Personal hygiene is the key in the prevention of many childhood illnesses but more importantly it will assist in the prevention of MRSA. MRSA is a strain of staph bacteria that has mutated and does not respond to most antibiotics making it easily spread from person to person through skin to skin contact or touching a contaminated surface.

What are typical symptoms of MRSA?

Common signs of a skin infection include redness, warmth, swelling and tenderness. Often a MRSA infection will look like a spider bite, boil, abscess or pimple. If left untreated, it could progress into a more serious illness.

How is MRSA spread?

In outbreak situations, the environment has not played a significant role in the transmission of MRSA. Studies in health care and community settings show skin-to-skin contact, direct contact with infected wound drainage or contact with contaminated surfaces or things such as sports equipment as the likely sources of transmission. MRSA skin infections are not spread through the air.

The CDC recommends the following procedures to avoid contracting the bacteria:

1. Keep your hands clean by frequent washing with soap and water or an alcohol based hand cleaner.
2. Keep cuts and scrapes clean and bandaged until they are healed.
3. Avoid contact with other folk's wounds or bandages.
4. Avoid using the personal items of others such as razors or towels.

How can students protect themselves?

Students can protect themselves from infections by:

1. Practicing good hygiene (e.g., keeping their hands clean by washing with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rubs, and showering after games and practices).
2. Covering any open skin areas such as abrasions or cuts with clean dry bandages; not sharing personal items such as towels or razors.
3. Using barriers (e.g., clothing or towels) between skin and shared equipment.
4. If they have open wounds, NOT using whirlpools, hydrotherapy pools, cold tubs, swimming pools and other common tubs.
5. Wiping surfaces of equipment before and after use.
6. Getting tested if they think they may have MRSA.

Additional information can be found on the CDC website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/index.html>