

Since November, we have received confirmed reports that 3 students in the district have been diagnosed with a skin infection known as Community-Associated Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (CA-MRSA). In light of that, we would like to make you aware of some pertinent information about CA-MRSA and let you know what you can do to protect against it.

WHAT IS CA-MRSA?

It is an infection caused by a bacteria know as Staphylococcus Aureus. While 'staph' infections are a fairly common cause of skin infections, CA-MRSA infections have become resistant to some types of antibiotics, like Penicillin for instance. CA-MRSA is not new - but it IS treatable. In the community, it usually manifests in the form of skin infections which resemble pimples or boils that are red, swollen, painful, and often pus-filled or draining. CA-MRSA infections are often mistaken for spider bites or impetigo.

HOW IS IT SPREAD?

Factors that have been associated with the spread of CA-MRSA skin infections include:

- * close skin to skin contact
- * openings in the skin such as cuts and abrasions
- * contaminated surfaces
- * sharing contaminated personal items such as razors, deodorants, towels, unwashed clothing, etc.
- * poor hygiene

PREVENTION IS KEY!

To limit the spread of CA-MRSA, the Centers for Disease Control and the Illinois Department of Public Health recommend the following preventative measures:

- * Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water – or using a hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol if soap and water is not available. ***This is good prevention from MANY diseases – for ALL people!***
- * Keep all cuts and abrasions (especially those that are fluid filled or draining) covered with a clean, dry bandage until they are healed.
- * Avoid contact with other peoples wounds or bandages.
- * Avoid sharing any personal items that come in contact with your skin.
- * Practice good hygiene.
- * Report any suspicious infection to your health care provider immediately and follow the recommended course of treatment completely.

We have been in contact with the Ogle County Health Department and the Illinois Department of Public Health concerning this matter and are following the cleaning and monitoring recommendations they have provided. At this time, it does not appear that CA-MRSA is being spread – and that the cases we know of are unrelated. If you notice that you or your student has an open sore or other skin infection that will not clear up, please contact your health care provider.

For additional information regarding CA-MRSA please visit:

<http://www.idph.state.il.us/public/hb/hbmrsa.htm>

<http://www.idph.state.il.us/health/infect/hygiene.htm>