

MRSA – Methicillin- Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus

Staphylococcus, or “staph”, is one of over 200 types of bacteria that under normal circumstances inhabits our bodies without causing illness. Overuse and misuse of antibiotics has caused the staphylococcus bacterium to mutate so that it is now resistant to many commonly used antibiotics; thus the name MRSA. Historically MRSA infections were seen primarily in hospital settings. Now MRSA is occurring in the community in individuals who have had no association with a hospital setting.

What to look for: We all carry staph bacteria on our skin and sometimes in our noses without becoming ill, but a staph infection can occur if staph enters our bodies through a break in our skin, such as an insect bite, or a cut or abrasion that is not properly cleaned. Staph infections typically present as an infected hair follicle, or a large pimple or boil and are sometimes mistakenly diagnosed as spider bites. The staph infection may start out as a reddened nodule on the skin. Over the period of a day or two, the nodule will increase in diameter. The skin over the nodule will become red, painful, and hot to the touch. It will develop a core of whitish pus. If the nodule is very large and there is a large amount of pus, oral antibiotics may not be sufficient to get rid of the infection. In this case the physician may need to make an incision into the nodule to drain and clean it; and the infection may need to be treated with intravenous antibiotics. It is likely that the physician will send a sample of the drainage to a laboratory to identify the cause of the infection and to determine which antibiotic will be most effective in treating it.

What LHPS Can Do: Our goal is to educate and to do what we can to prevent infections from occurring. The easiest and most effective way to prevent the spread of any infection is to keep our hands washed. It is also important to keep any wounds or sores properly covered, especially if they are draining. Clothing and towels should be taken home and washed daily. Students should also be encouraged to bathe daily, particularly after participating in athletic activities.

What you can do: Tell your child it is important that they notify you if they have a sore that is painful, draining, or not healing. If you suspect your child may have a staph infection, call your doctor immediately. Your child should be seen by a doctor who can culture, or take a sample of the drainage. Encourage your child to bathe regularly, keep wounds clean and bandaged, and never share equipment or personal items like clothing or towels. **If your child is diagnosed with a staph, or MRSA infection notify the clinic and the athletic coaches if your child plays sports so that we can be sure the infected area is properly bandaged and does not pose a risk to others. Again, you must inform the clinic if your child is being treated for MRSA.**

For further information and photographs of MRSA infections you may refer to the internet. The Centers for Disease Control webpage is one such site:

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