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## **Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is MRSA?**

MRSA is a type of “staph” infection that is resistant to many antibiotics and frequently causes skin infections.

### **What do MRSA skin infections look like?**

Often, an MRSA infection will look like a spider bite, boil, abscess, or turf burn.

### **How is MRSA spread?**

MRSA skin infections are generally spread by skin-to-skin contact or by direct contact with the infected wound drainage. MRSA may also be spread by contact with contaminated surfaces or things such as sports equipment or personal hygiene items. MRSA skin infections are not spread through the air.

### **How do you prevent and control the spread of MRSA?**

Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer if water is not available. Avoid sharing personal items such as bar soap, towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, or athletic equipment. Report any suspicious skin infection to your healthcare provider or school nurse immediately.

If you participate in sports, shower immediately after each practice, game, or match. Wear practice uniforms only once; wash with soap and hot water, dry in hot dryer. Avoid contact with skin infections of others. If you have a draining skin infection, make sure any exposed wounds are covered with a clean, dry bandage taped on all 4 sides.

### **Should a child with MRSA be excluded from school or separated from other students?**

A child with MRSA should only be excluded from school in rare instances in which the wound drainage cannot be contained with a dry bandage, or if a doctor feels the child is too ill to attend school. Students with infected wounds adequately covered with a bandage should not be separated from classmates.

### **Should a school notify parents when a single case of MRSA is identified in a school?**

Schools should use their judgment, in consultation with their local health departments and school district leadership, to determine when parents should be notified about MRSA infections in students. MRSA is not likely to be transmitted in the school setting, outside of special circumstances such as contact sports. For this reason, in general, parental notification is not necessary.

### **When should schools close for disinfection and cleaning?**

Commonly touched surfaces in schools, such as computers and bathroom surfaces, should be routinely cleaned and disinfected. Sports equipment and related surfaces such as mats should also be cleaned and disinfected. School closure for MRSA should almost never be necessary. Officials may want to consider closing a school if there is evidence that MRSA is spreading throughout the school despite routine cleaning and disinfection, plus intense efforts to improve hand washing and personal hygiene.