

October 24, 2007

Dear Parents and Students:

Washington Township High School has recently been informed that one case of Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA) skin infection has been confirmed among one of our students. Fortunately, the one student involved is being treated, doing well, and is not contagious.

MRSA is a type of infection caused by *Staph* bacteria that is resistant to some common antibiotics such as penicillin. While most cases have involved athletes, cases involving non-athletes can also occur. Skin infections such as abscesses and boils are the most common form of this infection. The infected area usually starts out as a small bump resembling a pimple or spider bite, which becomes redder and often develops pus drainage. *Staphylococcus* bacteria (or *Staph*) are commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy individuals. *Staph* and MRSA are spread by close contact either through direct physical contact with an infected individual or by touching objects (e.g. towels, sheets, wound dressings, clothes, or sports equipment) contaminated with the bacteria.

In most cases, MRSA infections are mild and can be treated successfully with proper hygiene and the appropriate antibiotics. If left untreated, MRSA can progress to a life-threatening infection and become difficult to treat because there are fewer effective antibiotics available at this stage of the illness.

Our school physician Dr. Ted Koerner recommends the following guidelines to help prevent and control the spread of MRSA:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water.
- Avoid sharing personal items (e.g. towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, or uniforms).
- Wash all uniforms and clothing in hot water and laundry detergent frequently.
- Report any suspicious skin sore or boil to your healthcare provider (including the school nurse and/or athletic trainer) immediately.
- If you participate in sports involving close personal contact (e.g. wrestling and football), shower with soap immediately after each practice, game, or match. (Do not share bar soap)
- Non-washable gear (i.e. head protectors), should be wiped down with alcohol after each use.
- Individuals with an infection involving drainage (i.e. pus drainage) should be excluded from participation in sporting events and practices until no pus drainage is present, until the infected site can be adequately covered with a bandage and clothing, and until a physician's release has been obtained.
- Any cut or break in the skin should be washed with soap and water and a clean dressing applied on a daily basis.



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Washington Township High School is taking every precaution to keep your sons and daughters as safe as possible. All school facilities including athletic locker rooms, weight room, training room, shower and bathroom areas, school lockers, and all door handles, as well as buses, have been sanitized.

For further information please visit our District website, as well as the following websites:

CDC's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/> <http://nj.gov/health/cd/mrsa/index.shtml>

Please contact the school nurse, Mrs. Raftery in the 11/12 at 589-8500 x7044, Mrs. Cotton in the 9/10 at x7631, or our athletic trainer, Mrs. Dargusch,

Sincerely,

Rosemarie T. Farrow
Principal



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