

November 8, 2007

Dear Parents:

You may have heard or seen recent news coverage regarding MRSA (Methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus) and may be understandably concerned about your child's health.

MRSA is essentially a staph infection that is resistant to most antibiotics. It has been in the news lately because of a new national report about the number of cases in the United States and reports of cases of the illness in schools. While this is a very real health concern, it is important to know that MRSA is a treatable infection, although not all antibiotics are effective.

In order to increase knowledge, the following are some frequently asked questions about MRSA:

What type of infections does MRSA cause?

In the community, most MRSA infections are of the skin. They may appear as boils, "spider bites", pustules or turf burn, and are often red, swollen, painful, and may have pus or other drainage. These infections commonly occur in areas of skin trauma, and areas of the body covered by hair.

Most MRSA infections are effectively treated by drainage, with or without antibiotics. More serious infections, such as infection within the bloodstream, lungs, or bone, are very rare in healthy people who get MRSA skin infections.

How is MRSA transmitted?

MRSA is usually transmitted by direct skin-to-skin contact or contact with shared items or surfaces that have come in contact with someone else's infection.

How do I protect myself from getting MRSA?

- Frequent hand washing and showering after participating in exercise.
- Cover all skin wounds with a clean bandage until completely healed.
- Avoid sharing personal items (e.g. soap bars, towels, and razors).
- Use a barrier between your skin and shared equipment (e.g. weight benches).
- Establish a routine for disinfecting surfaces that come into direct contact with people's skin.

Should Students with MRSA skin infections be excluded from school?

Unless directed by a physician, students with MRSA skin infections should not be excluded from attending school. Exclusion from school and sports activities should be reserved for those with wound drainage that cannot be contained with a clean bandage, or who cannot maintain good personal hygiene.

If you have additional questions regarding MRSA please feel free to contact our school nurse, Chelsea Small at 784-1314, or e-mail csmall@entiatschools.org. There are also some great resources on the state Department of Health Website at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/Topics/Antibiotics/MRSA.htm>.

Sincerely,

Michael Wyant, Superintendent