

About MRSA or Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus Bacteria

MRSA infections are skin infections that appear as pustules or boils which often are red, swollen, painful or have pus or other drainage. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, almost all MRSA infections can be successfully treated with or without antibiotics.

MRSA is typically transmitted by DIRECT skin to skin contact OR contact with shared items or surfaces (e.g. used towels, bandages, shared sports equipment, etc). It is estimated that 30-50% of the population are carriers of the staphylococcus bacteria on his/her skin or in the nose passages and it can be easily transmitted from one person to another.

“Prevention is the best defense” and students and staff should be educated and reminded about the importance of simple hand washing frequently and practicing good personal hygiene overall. All cuts and open draining wounds MUST be covered with a secure bandage.

SCHOOL ACTIONS WHEN STUDENT IS INFECTED WITH MRSA

1. Students may attend school as long as skin infection is covered. If the student has been hospitalized, the parent must present a note from the physician stating that the student may return to school and if there are any accommodations needed for school attendance. To reduce the potential spreading, students should be excused from contact PE sports classes, athletic practice and competitions until wound is healed.
2. School personnel should always encourage good hand washing or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer throughout the day.
3. If teachers or school personnel observe a student with open draining wounds or infection, the wound should be cleansed with soap and water and a barrier/clean dressing should be provided. Parent/Guardian should be notified.
4. Athletic trainers in high schools, PE coaches and teachers sponsoring athletic groups such as dance, cheerleading, etc. should educate students to avoid sharing personal items (towels and razors) that come into contact with bare skin. They should encourage students to use a barrier (clothing or towel) between skin and shared equipment such as weight training equipment, benches and PE mats.
5. School administrators need to assure a clean school environment by having the custodial staff follow established cleaning procedures for frequently touched surfaces and surfaces that come into direct contact with a student’s skin. Clean desktops and tables regularly with approved germicidal cleanser and sanitize athletic equipment on a regular basis.
6. In most cases, it is not necessary to close schools because of a MRSA infection in a student. A decision to close a school would be made by the Superintendent in consultation with the Seminole County Health Department.

PRECAUTIONS

The Florida Department of Health highlights the following Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended precautions:

- Frequent hand washing is the single most important preventive measure to avoid infection with MRSA. Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.
- Avoid unnecessary use of antibiotics.
- Additional material on MRSA can be found at the CDC web site:
<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/MRSAinSchools/>