

Control of MRSA in Schools

NC Public Health Recommendations

Introduction

Cases of MRSA in schools can cause much anxiety for parents and school staff. This document is intended to provide information about MRSA infections in this setting and how to prevent them.

MRSA in School Children

MRSA can be found in up to 10% of school-aged children; most of these children will never get sick from it. MRSA is spread through direct physical contact with an infected person. Draining lesions are highly infectious and represent an important source of spread. MRSA can also be spread by touching objects that have been soiled with drainage from an infected wound- e.g., bandages, towels, or athletic equipment- although this is less common than direct person-to-person spread.

Control Measures

The risk of transmitting MRSA in the classroom is low compared to settings with a higher degree of physical contact (e.g., athletic teams) or frequent sharing of personal items (e.g., households, locker rooms).

The spread of infection in schools can be controlled if all staff and students adhere to these basic hygiene measures:

- Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Wash any cut or break in the skin with soap and water and apply a clean bandage daily.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages. If a staff member is required to assist with a student's bandage, that staff member should wear gloves, place the used bandage in the trash, and wash his/her hands and forearms immediately after removing gloves.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels.

Students or staff with symptoms of MRSA should see a doctor or other qualified healthcare provider and do all of the following:

- Keep draining wounds clean and covered. Change bandages at least 2 times per day and when soiled. Place used bandages in the trash immediately.
- Wash your hands and forearms before and after caring for the wound and frequently throughout the day. Use soap and warm water for 15 seconds and dry your hands on a clean towel or paper towel.
- Take all antibiotics as prescribed
- Report new skin sores or boils to your doctor immediately.

Decisions about when a child with known or suspected MRSA skin infections can return to school should be made by a doctor or other qualified healthcare provider. In general, students with draining lesions should not be excluded from school if they are able to keep the lesions adequately and completely covered with a dry bandage. Not all MRSA skin lesions require treatment with antibiotics. Therefore no specific course or duration of antibiotic treatment is required for re-entry unless specified by the healthcare provider.

Additional Information:

1. [NC Public Health Recommendations for Control of MRSA on Athletic Teams](#)
2. [NC Public Health Recommendations for Control of MRSA in the Child Care Setting](#)

MRSA FACT SHEET



What is MRSA?

MRSA is methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, a potentially dangerous type of staph bacteria that is resistant to certain antibiotics and may cause skin and other infections. As with all regular staph infections, recognizing the signs and receiving treatment for MRSA skin infections in the early stages reduces the chances of the infection becoming severe. MRSA is spread by:

- > Having direct contact with another person's infection
- > Sharing personal items, such as towels or razors, that have touched infected skin
- > Touching surfaces or items, such as used bandages, contaminated with MRSA

What are the signs and symptoms?

Most staph skin infections, including MRSA, appear as a bump or infected area on the skin that may be:

- > Red
- > Swollen
- > Painful
- > Warm to the touch
- > Full of pus or other drainage
- > Accompanied by a fever

What if I suspect an MRSA skin infection?

Cover the area with a bandage and contact your healthcare professional. It is especially important to contact your healthcare professional if signs and symptoms of an MRSA skin infection are accompanied by a fever.

How are MRSA skin infections treated?

Treatment for MRSA skin infections may include having a healthcare professional drain the infection and, in some cases, prescribe an antibiotic. Do not attempt to drain the infection yourself – doing so could worsen or spread it to others. If you are given an antibiotic, be sure to take all of the doses (even if the infection is getting better), unless your healthcare professional tells you to stop taking it.

How can I protect my family from MRSA skin infections?

- > Know the signs of MRSA skin infections and get treated early
- > Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered
- > Encourage good hygiene such as cleaning hands regularly
- > Discourage sharing of personal items such as towels and razors



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**For more information, please call
1-800-CDC-INFO or visit www.cdc.gov/MRSA.**

