

Information for Parents Concerning MRSA

Media reports during the past several days have caused concern about a particular type of staph infection, MRSA.

Following is information about MRSA and the best practices for its prevention developed by Loudoun County Public Schools in cooperation with the Loudoun County Health Department, the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Department of Health. Staphylococcus aureus (“staph”) infections are not new. They can cause mild to severe illness.

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a kind of staph infection that may be more difficult to treat, but is otherwise the same as a “staph infection.” It does not respond to routine treatment with some commonly used antibiotics, although other antibiotics are effective. Mild infections may look like a pimple or boil and can be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage.

More serious infections may cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or surgical wound infections.

Staph is passed from person to person through direct contact with skin or with contaminated items. The bacteria may live in people’s noses and on their skin and most of the time they don’t cause any problem. Staph can enter the body through breaks in the skin and sometimes cause infection. The main ways to prevent staph infection are to wash your hands and care for wounds properly. More information on MRSA can be found at www.vdh.virginia.gov

Practical Advice for Parents

- Clean wounds and cover them with a clean, dry bandage. Wounds that do not heal properly need medical attention. The only way to determine if an infection is caused by MRSA is through laboratory testing ordered by a physician or other health care provider.
- Teach children to wash their hands regularly, such as before eating and after using the bathroom. They also should use the hand sanitizers that have been installed throughout LCPS schools.
- Be sure your family members use antibiotics properly. Take all that are prescribed, even if the symptoms stop before the prescription is used up. Do not share prescriptions.
- Children who participate in sports should wash their hands after each practice and game. They should not share equipment, uniforms, towels, or other personal items, such as razors. Wash uniforms and towels with hot water and detergent after each use.

Precautions Loudoun County Public Schools are using to prevent MRSA

- Schools are cleaned daily using EPA-approved cleaners that kill a variety of bacteria and viruses, including MRSA.
- Students are encouraged to wash their hands and use hand sanitizer before eating, after using the bathroom and at other times when hands may be soiled.
- Students with open wounds are sent to the nurse for cleaning and bandaging.
- Students with wounds that appear to be infected are referred to a physician for care.
- If a student has a diagnosis of MRSA, the Loudoun County Health Department is contacted for guidance.