



Atlantic County

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TO: School Nurses, Athletic Directors, and Trainers
FROM: Patricia Diamond, Atlantic County Health Officer

METHICILLIN-RESISTANT *STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS* (MRSA) IN SCHOOLS: PREVENTION AND CONTROL RECOMMENDATIONS

As the fall 2007 high school sports season begins, so too does the risk of spreading skin infections caused by Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in the school and athletic settings.

As a reminder, factors that have been associated with the spread of MRSA skin infections among high school athletes include: close skin-to-skin contact, openings in the skin such as cuts or abrasions, contaminated items and surfaces, crowded living conditions, and poor hygiene.

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.

The Atlantic County Division of Public Health is reissuing the following materials published by the State of New Jersey addressing prevention of Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) skin infections in the school and athletic settings:

- ♦ Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in Schools: Prevention and Control Recommendations (New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services)
- ♦ MRSA Preventing Skin Infections in School and Athletic Settings (Brochure)

While individual cases of some diseases (e.g., MRSA, streptococcal sore throat, head lice, impetigo, scabies and pneumonia) are not reportable, a cluster or outbreak of cases of any communicable disease must be reported to the Local Health Department.

Athletes who participate in sports involving direct physical contact (e.g. wrestling and football) and athletes participating in sports that do not involve direct physical contact, but who share workout areas should follow the health and hygiene practices listed below to help prevent and control MRSA within the athletic setting:

1. Wash hands frequently with soap and water, especially after using any sports facilities.
2. Avoid sharing personal items (e.g., towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, or uniforms) that may have had contact with and infected individual or potentially infectious material.
3. Report any suspicious skin sore or boil to your healthcare provider and school nurse immediately.
4. If you participate in sports involving close personal contact (e.g. wrestling and football) shower with soap immediately after each practice, game, or match.
5. Non-washable gear (e.g. head protectors), should be wiped down with alcohol after each use.
6. Athletic equipment such as wrestling or gymnastics mats should be wiped down regularly with an antibacterial solution (e.g. Hibiclens).
7. Athletes involved in close contact sports should receive a total body check by the appropriate athletic personnel prior to any game, match or tournament.
8. Individuals with an infection involving drainage (e.g. pus drainage), who are involved in close contact sports, should be excluded from participation in sporting events and practices until no pus drainage is present and the infected site can be adequately covered with a bandage and clothing.
9. Any cut or break in the skin should be washed with soap and water and a clean, dry dressing applied on a daily basis, before and after participation in close contact sports, and after using any sports facilities.
10. Tell your healthcare provider (e.g. primary care doctor or school nurse) and the appropriate athletic personnel if you currently have or have had a history of an antibiotic-resistant *Staph* skin infection(s).

To limit the spread of MRSA infections in school settings, NJDHSS and the Atlantic County Division of Public Health are requesting that School Nurses, Athletic Directors and Trainers review their institutional infection control policies and incorporate the state recommendations contained in the above referenced document.

To report unusual incidents of skin infections or for further assistance please contact our County Epidemiologist, Eric Adler, MPH at (609) 645-7700 ext. 4258.

Enclosures

Cc: School Principal with enclosures