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Roger D. Collins, Ed. D.
Division Superintendent

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Dear Parents:

Many of you may be aware that there have been several recent reports in surrounding areas regarding the staph infection called MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus). The purpose of this letter is to help you learn more about MRSA, steps you can take to stay healthy, and what our schools are doing to prevent the possible spread of infection.

Generally, staph infections are mild skin infections that can progress to more serious infections if not treated appropriately and in a timely fashion. MRSA is not an air borne disease and thus direct contact with an infected skin lesion, or with an item contaminated by drainage from a skin lesion, is usually the method of infection. Please find the following recommendations in preventing or treating MRSA:


- Wash hands often, especially when exposed to someone with an infection or when touching objects that may be contaminated.
- 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.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, sports equipment, razors, etc.
- Children who participate in sporting events should wash their hands, or preferably shower, after each practice and game. Towels and uniforms should not be shared, and should be washed in hot water and detergent after each use.
- If a sore or cut becomes red, oozes, causes pain or isn't healing, consult a doctor.
- Be sure 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. Do not insist on antibiotics for colds or other viruses.

School division personnel have taken the following steps to reduce the spread of germs and possible infection:

- Increased employee awareness by providing information about MRSA and prevention.
- Increased and enhanced custodial cleaning and disinfecting efforts within our schools.
- Posted information on our website, www.nelson.k12.va.us, to provide information to the community on the nature of this infection and methods to prevent its spread to others.
- Increased student awareness of good personal hygiene and the importance of frequent hand-washing.

While MRSA is commonly found in the environment and can't be eliminated, we are striving to provide the safest environment for our students and staff. Should you have additional questions, do not hesitate to contact the school administration, school nurse or local health department officials.

Sincerely,



Roger D. Collins, Ed. D.
Division Superintendent

MRSA: What you should know

Methicillin-resistant

Staphylococcus aureus

(MRSA) is a type of “staph”

bacteria that causes skin infections that can't be treated with certain antibiotics. It is sometimes mistaken for a “spider bite.” Symptoms may range from minor to

serious, including skin redness and swelling, “pimple-like” red bumps, boils, rash, fever, headache, and

malaise. Infections can spread quickly to other parts of the body or to other people. This brochure contains information about MRSA, including risk, treatment and prevention.



Here's what you can do if a MRSA infection is present:

- ✓ Use antibiotics only as directed by a healthcare provider
- ✓ Keep wounds clean and bandaged until healed
- ✓ Keep hands and skin clean
- ✓ Avoid sharing personal items, like towels, wash cloths, bar soap and razors, even among family members
- ✓ Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces, shared items and equipment per manufacturer's instructions (for example: soap and water, diluted bleach, Lysol®, Original Pine-Sol®, or similar disinfectants).



Additional information about MRSA is available on these Web sites:

www.michigan.gov/mdch

www.reduce misuse.org

www.cdc.gov/drugresistance



Protecting our antibiotic lifeline.

This brochure was made possible with support from the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) and the Michigan Antibiotic Resistance Reduction Coalition (MARR).

MRSA: What You Should Know

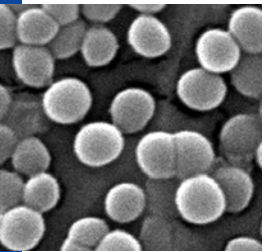
Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*



Identify

What is MRSA?

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is a type of bacteria that causes “staph” infections, ranging from minor skin infections, “pimple-like” red bumps or boils, to serious infections, like pneumonia. But, MRSA infections can’t be treated with antibiotics commonly used to treat non-resistant “staph” infections. Healthcare providers diagnose MRSA by taking a culture of the infected site.



Types of Infections Caused by MRSA

• “Pimple-like” red bumps	• Abscess
• Folliculitis	• Cellulitis
• Boil	• Impetigo
• Osteomyelitis	• Pneumonia
• Meningitis	• Endocarditis
	• Blood stream

How does MRSA spread?

MRSA usually spreads from person to person through hands or close, skin-to-skin contact. Drainage from an infected wound can spread MRSA to other parts of the body or to other persons. We are all at risk for getting a MRSA infection, because MRSA can live on the skin and survive on some surfaces for prolonged periods of time.

Risk Factors for MRSA

• Close skin-to-skin contact
• Touching contaminated items and surfaces
• Crowded living conditions, like correctional facilities, dormitories, etc.
• Inadequate personal hygiene
• Openings in the skin, like cuts or abrasions
• Hospitalization, surgery or dialysis
• Indwelling medical devices, like a catheter or IV
• Living in a long-term care or rehabilitation facility

Control

How is MRSA treated?

Antibiotics are not always needed to treat MRSA skin infections. Sometimes, a healthcare provider only needs to open and drain the wound. The wound should be cleaned often and kept covered to prevent spreading the infection.



If wound drainage cannot be fully contained under a bandage, avoid close contact with others (work, school, sports activities) to prevent spreading MRSA.

Do antibiotics work on MRSA?

When necessary, antibiotics may be used to treat MRSA infections. A healthcare provider should culture the infection to determine which antibiotic will work best.

Remember that antibiotics are “antibacterial,” they do not work on viral infections, like colds or flu. It is very important to take antibiotics exactly as prescribed. Don’t save them or share them with other people.



Clean hands are the single most important factor in preventing the spread of dangerous germs. Wash hands with soap and water, and scrub for at least 15 seconds.

Prevent

How can I avoid getting or spreading MRSA?

Personal hygiene:

- Wash hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after touching wounds or bandages.
- Do not share personal items, like towels, bar soap, wash cloths, razors, or clothing – even among family members.

Wound care:

- Seek care immediately at first signs of infection (red, swollen, painful, warm, draining pus).
- Keep wounds clean and covered with a dry bandage, especially if the wound is draining.
- Follow your healthcare provider’s instructions on proper wound care.
- Throw away soiled bandages.
- Avoid contact with other people’s wounds or bandages.

Laundry:

- Wash clothes, towels and sheets in water with laundry detergent at hottest suitable temperature. Add bleach, if desired (check label instructions). Dry in a dryer at hottest suitable temperature – do not “line dry.”

Cleaning:

- Clean and disinfect high-touch or soiled surfaces (for example, door knobs and phones frequently, and shared sports equipment between uses) according to item label cleaning instructions. Types of cleaning/disinfecting products include soap and water, diluted bleach, Lysol®, Original Pine-Sol®. Follow label instructions for appropriate dilutions and contact times to be sure that surfaces are cleaned properly.