

WAPPINGERS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

The incidence of reported cases of Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) in community settings such as schools has been a matter of concern for parents and other caregivers. The District would like to advise you of the actions it is implementing to prevent the spread of such infections and provide you with recommendations from the New York State Department of Health regarding steps you yourself can take to protect your family from such infections.

The district has proactively initiated the following measures:

- Cleaning wipes and hand sanitizers have been provided to all schools for use in high traffic areas such as: cafeteria and gymnasium facilities.
- Nursing staff has been trained in the identification of MRSA and additional training is planned with our district physician.
- Principals and staff have been informed of necessary precautions to take for prevention purposes and each classroom/homeroom teacher is reviewing district precautions with their students.
- Sports equipment is being sanitized regularly with particular emphasis on the weight rooms and gym mats.
- Facilities personnel are working closely with district administration, reviewing our sanitizing procedures to optimize our cleaning process.

The following recommendations have been provided by the New York State Department of Health.

- Keep hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap (preferably not bar soap) and water or with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if hands are not visibly soiled.
- Practice good skin care. Since staph infections start when staph enters the body through a break in the skin, keeping skin healthy and intact is an important preventive measure.
- Wash any cut or break in the skin with soap and water and apply a clean bandage until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as cloth towels.
- If you notice any small red bumps that resemble spider bites that develop any redness, swelling or tenderness, contact your healthcare provider.

Please contact your school nurse if you have any questions. Additional information may be found at the following website

www.cdc.gov/Features/MRSAinSchools/

In addition we would like to provide you with information regarding MRSA from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Powell
Superintendent of Schools

Center for Disease Control and Prevention – Questions and Answers

What type of infections does Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) cause?

- In the community most MRSA infections are skin infections that may appear as pustules or boils which often are red, swollen or painful or have pus or other drainage. These skin infections commonly occur at sites of visible skin trauma, such as cuts and abrasions and areas of the body covered by hair (i.e. back of neck, groin, buttock, armpit, beard area of men)
- Almost all MRSA skin infections can be effectively treated by drainage of pus with or without antibiotics. More serious infection such as pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or bone infections are very rare in healthy people who get MRSA skin infections.

How is MRSA transmitted?

- MRSA is usually transmitted by direct skin-to-skin contact or contact with shared items or surfaces that have come into contact with someone else's infection (i.e. towels, used bandages)

In what settings do MRSA skin infections occur?

- MRSA skin infections can occur anywhere.
- Some settings have factors that make it easier for MRSA to be transmitted.
 - These factors, referred to as the 5C's are as follows: Crowding, frequent skin-to-skin Contact, Compromised skin (i.e. cuts/abrasions), Contaminated items and surfaces and lack of Cleanliness.
 - Locations where the 5 C's are common include: schools, dormitories, military barracks, households, correctional facilities and daycare centers.

How do I protect myself from getting MRSA?

You can protect yourself by:

- Practicing good hygiene
- Covering skin trauma such as abrasions or cuts, with a clean dry bandage.
- Avoiding sharing personal items (i.e. towels, razors) that come into contact with your bare skin and using a barrier between your skin and shared equipment such as weight-training benches.
- Maintaining a clean environment by establishing cleaning procedures for frequently touched surfaces and surfaces that come into direct contact with people's skin.

Should schools close because of an MRSA infection?

- In general it is not necessary to close schools to "disinfect" them when MRSA infections occur. MRSA skin infections are transmitted primarily by skin-to-skin contact and contact with surfaces that have come into contact with someone else's infection.
- When MRSA skin infections occur, cleaning and disinfection should be performed on surfaces that are likely to contact uncovered or poorly covered infections.
- Cleaning surfaces with detergent-based cleaners or EPA registered disinfectants is effective at removing MRSA from the environment.