

## Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* Infections: MRSA Facts for Schools

*Staphylococcus aureus* (“staph”) infections have been around for a long time, causing mild to severe illness. MRSA is a kind of staph infection that may be more difficult to treat but is otherwise the same as a “staph infection”. 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 through contact with contaminated items. The bacteria may live in people’s noses and on their skin and most of the time do not 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 hands and care for wounds properly.

### Practical Advice for Teachers

Observe children for open wounds. If any are draining or contain pus, refer the child to the school nurse.

Encourage handwashing before eating and after toileting.

Coaches should ensure that athletes wash their hands, cover their wounds, and not share personal items and towels. Refer to [www.vdh.virginia.gov](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov) for more details.

### Practical Advice for Parents

Clean wounds and cover them with a clean, dry bandage. Wounds that do not heal properly need medical attention.

Teach children to wash their hands regularly, such as before eating and after toileting. See <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/Epidemiology/Surveillance/Getsmart/documents/germposter.pdf> for a poster on handwashing.

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 sporting events should wash their hands after each practice and game. They should not share equipment, uniforms, towels, or other personal items (e.g., razors). Wash uniforms and towels with hot water and detergent after each use.

### Disinfection

In athletics, mats, benches or other shared athletic equipment that might have skin contact should be disinfected after each game or practice.

Contaminated surfaces may be cleaned using an EPA-registered cleaner or bleach solution (1 part bleach to 9 parts water).

Routine cleaning is all that is recommended. Because the bacteria live on the skin, they may be reintroduced into any environment at any time. Therefore, hand washing and wound care remain the primary means of preventing staph infections.

For more information, visit the Virginia Department of Health web site at [www.virginia.gov](http://www.virginia.gov)

October 16, 2007

