

The media has reported a national rise in the number of cases of MRSA infections (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*), commonly called "staph" bacteria infections that are resistant to some antibiotics. Staph infections are commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people; these infections are spread by direct skin-to-skin contact, such as shaking hands. Staph infections also are spread by contact with items that have been touched by people with staph, such as towels shared after bathing or shared athletic equipment in the gym or on the field.

As a precaution, we are asking parents, students, and staff to read and follow the measures listed below:

- Regular hand washing is the best way to prevent getting and spreading MRSA. Keep hands clean by washing them frequently with soap and warm water or hand sanitizer, and especially after direct contact with another person's skin.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until they have healed.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, washcloths, and toothbrushes. Sharing these items may transfer MRSA from one person to another.
- Keep your skin healthy, and avoid getting dry, cracked skin, especially during the winter. Healthy skin helps to keep the MRSA on the surface of your skin from causing an infection underneath your skin.
- Contact your doctor if you have a skin infection that does not improve.

In addition, please have student-athletes following the measures listed below:

- Do not share towels (even on the sidelines at a game), soap, razors, or other personal care items.
- Do not share ointments or antibiotics.
- Wash towels, uniforms, scrimmage shirts, and any other laundry in hot water and ordinary detergent, and dry on the hottest cycle after each use. (Laundry must be in an impervious container or plastic bag for transporting home).
- Avoid whirlpools or common hot tubs, especially when having open wounds, scrapes, or scratches.
- Inform your coach or athletic trainer if you think you have a skin infection.

Superintendent of Schools Victoria Kniewel stated, "We are not overly alarmed at this time, we are just being careful and cautious with students and staff. If parents

need more information, I recommend they seek out their medical professionals for advice."

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