



**CONTRA COSTA PUBLIC HEALTH
COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PROGRAMS**

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TO: Contra Costa School Officials

FROM: Francie Wise, Communicable Disease Program Chief

SUBJECT: Staph Infection ***MRSA***

We have received several calls of concern from school officials about the possible presence of staph infection, and methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) within the school communities and other public settings.

(More information for school officials and a complete list of prevention recommendation are available on cchealth.org)

What is MRSA

Staphylococcus aureus, or staph, is a common germ that many people carry in their nasal passages, under fingernails or on their skin without ill effects. MRSA is a type of staph bacteria that has developed antibiotic resistance (certain antibiotics are unable to kill the bacteria). Since staph is spread primarily by direct (skin-to-skin) human contact or with direct contact to wound drainage of someone who is carrying or infected with the bacteria, anyone with a break in his or her skin is at risk if that skin is in contact with MRSA. MRSA may also occur less frequently through contact with contaminated surfaces or items. MRSA is not spread through the air.

What do symptoms look like?

A lesion (sore) that does not begin to heal within 48 hours, but enlarges and becomes red, hot and/or swollen (boil or carbuncle) may be infected with MRSA or some other organism. If a student has this type of lesion he/she should contact his/her health care provider. Remember, all skin conditions are not MRSA.

Contra Costa Cases

Schools and health care providers are not required to report cases of staph infections and MRSA. Currently we are working with a number of schools that have concerns about MRSA. We encourage schools to call us if there are questions regarding control of MRSA in their facility. In the past, we have worked with many facilities including schools on issues of control of MRSA.

Recommended Action

Some school officials have asked whether schools should be closed when a MRSA case is identified to prevent the spread of the infections. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises that in most cases, it is not necessary to close schools because of an infection with MRSA in a student. It is important to note that MRSA transmission can be

prevented by simple measures such as regular hand washing with soap and water, covering infected lesions and a regular/standardized cleaning of the facility and equipment.

Please contact Contra Costa Public Health/Communicable Disease Unit at 925-313-6740 if you need more information and/or assistance or have questions.

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