

Selected Facts about Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

Summarized by APS/AB School Nurses

- **Description** - Staph are bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. About 25-30% of the US population carries staph on their bodies at any time. MRSA is a rare type of staph that is resistant to some antibiotics. Severe infections with MRSA are rare and are more commonly seen in health care setting, not schools.
- **Transmission** – Staph, including MRSA are spread by direct skin-to-skin contact. It can also be spread by contact with items that have been touched or used by people with staph such as sharing towels, razors, and athletic equipment. Most people who have staph or MRSA on their skin do not have infections or illness. Staph infections including MRSA start when staph enter a cut or break in the skin.
- **Symptoms** – Minor staph infections may cause ordinary boils, pimples and rashes, such as impetigo. Severe staph infections are uncommon in healthy children. A sign of more serious infection could include high fever, headache, fatigue, heat and pain around a wound. The symptoms of MRSA are the same as other staph infections.
- **Treatment** – See your doctor if the infection is large, painful, swollen, red and does not heal by itself. Your doctor will determine if you need antibiotics. Students with a MRSA infection can attend school as long as the wound is covered and they are receiving proper treatment.
- **Reducing Risk** – Practicing good hygiene is the best way to prevent getting and spreading MRSA infections. Keep hands clean by washing them frequently with soap and warm water. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer gel when soap and water are not available. Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.

For more information about MRSA, visit the MDPH website at www.mass.gov/dph