

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA



CHESTERFIELD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

P. O. Box 100
Chesterfield, Virginia 23832



October 18, 2007

Dear Parent:

In light of recent events in Virginia and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report on invasive Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcal Aureus (MRSA) infections, we are sending you this letter to provide important information. We also want you to know steps are being taken locally to control this important public health issue. Most cases of noninvasive and invasive *Staphylococcus* ('staph') are still caused by organisms that are *sensitive* to most antibiotics. Those that are resistant are called "methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*." The vast majority of these MRSA infections are *not* invasive; rather they involve only the skin and are more easily treated.

The Chesterfield Health District and Chesterfield County Public Schools (CCPS) are working closely to ensure that all necessary steps are in place to prevent the spread of infection.

Although today there are no current staph outbreaks in CCPS facilities, we are doing the following:

- Enhancing MRSA awareness among faculty, staff and students
- Continuing to promote good hygiene and hygienic practices throughout the school system
- Having school health workers work with students and parents to ensure early detection and prompt medical evaluation of any suspicious skin sores.
- Reviewing daily cleaning procedures to be sure they are being implemented as expected.

Please be advised that federal, state and local recommendations for control of MRSA do *not* include the cancellation of practices or games because transmission of MRSA takes place when sharing contaminated material and objects, not skin contact during games and ordinary school activities.

You can help by practicing these guidelines and encouraging your student(s) to do the same:

- **Wash your hands often**, especially when you are exposed to someone with an infection or when you touch objects that may be contaminated.
- **Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered.**
- **Avoid sharing personal items** such as towels, sports equipment, razors, etc.
- **If a sore or cut becomes red, oozes, causes pain or is not healing, see a doctor promptly.**
- **Shower** after physical activity or sports.
- **Routinely clean surfaces, sports equipment and gear as 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. MRSA is not spread through the air.
- **If your child has or had a MRSA infection**, talk to your doctor about what precautions are necessary to prevent spread at home or at school. Let the school nurse and/or the coach of your sporting team know of the infection so appropriate hygienic measures can be taken.

Our Virginia Department of Health website, <http://www.vdh.state.va.us/> will direct you to additional MRSA information. If you have additional MRSA-related questions, please call the Chesterfield Health Department's School Health Services at 748-1633.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William R. Nelson MD".

William R. Nelson, M.D., M.P.H.
Director

Have you been diagnosed with a *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA infection?

Below are answers to some common questions...

What is *Staphylococcus aureus* or Staph?

Staph is a type of bacteria. It may cause skin infections that look like pimples or boils. Skin infections caused by Staph may be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. Some Staph (known as Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA) are resistant to certain antibiotics, making it harder to treat. The information on this page applies to both Staph and MRSA.

Who gets Staph infections?

Anyone can get a Staph infection. People are more likely to get a Staph infection if they have:

- Skin-to-skin contact with someone who has a Staph infection
- Contact with items and surfaces that have Staph on them
- Openings in their skin such as cuts or scrapes
- Crowded living conditions
- Poor hygiene

How serious are Staph infections?

Most Staph skin infections are minor and may be easily treated. Staph also may cause more serious infections, such as infections of the bloodstream, surgical sites, or pneumonia. Sometimes, a Staph infection that starts as a skin infection may worsen. It is important to contact your doctor if your infection does not get better.

How are Staph infections treated?

Treatment for a Staph skin infection may include taking an antibiotic or having a doctor drain the infection. If you are given an antibiotic, be sure to take all of the doses, even if the infection is getting better, unless your doctor tells you to stop taking it. Do not share antibiotics with other people or save them to use later.

How do I keep Staph infections from spreading?

- Wash your hands often or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Keep your cuts and scrapes clean and cover them with bandages
- Do not touch other people's cuts or bandages
- Do not share personal items like towels or razors

If you have any questions about your condition, please ask your doctor.
For more information, please visit: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa.html.

