



ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT  
of ADMINISTRATION

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October 17, 2007

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As many of you are aware, there have been several recent reports about a type of *staph* infection, called *Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus* ("MRSA"), in schools in our area. This letter is to provide an overview of the steps that are being taken in the Roanoke County Public Schools to prevent a MRSA outbreak.

MRSA is a serious public health concern because it is resistant to the antibiotics that are generally used to treat *Staph* infections. MRSA causes boils and skin infections; the infected area usually starts out as a small bump that resembles a pimple, which becomes redder and often develops drainage, swelling, tenderness, and warmth to the touch. If MRSA is diagnosed promptly, most infections can be treated successfully.

The Roanoke County Public School system is taking the following actions to prevent MRSA:

- Since proper hygiene is the single best way to prevent the spread of MRSA, we are cleaning our buses and schools – classrooms, restrooms, athletic facilities, and cafeterias regularly with an EPA approved antimicrobial. In light of the recent MRSA outbreaks in other school divisions, these cleaning protocols are being reinforced with our custodial staff.
- Good hygiene measures are routinely reinforced with the general student population and will continue to be reviewed with athletes on an ongoing basis.
- Coaches are monitoring the laundering of game uniforms and practice attire and are encouraging showers after games and practices.
- Waterless hand sanitizers are available in all locker rooms at the secondary level.

In the event we do have a confirmed MRSA outbreak, the following will be our protocol:

- We will report the case promptly to the Roanoke County Health Department.
- Any students who are confirmed to have MRSA will be permitted to attend classes only if they have been cleared to do so, in writing, by their physician. Affected skin areas must be covered with an appropriate bandage at all times.
- Athletes who are confirmed to have MRSA will not be allowed to play until they have been cleared to do so, in writing, by their physician.

If your child displays symptoms consistent with MRSA, or if you have a concern about your child's health, please contact their health care provider.

If your child is diagnosed to have or is suspected of having an infectious condition, it is important that you report this to their school nurse. You should also notify your child's coach if she/he participates in sports.

Please take a moment to review the MRSA Questions and Answers Sheet on the back of this letter, developed by the Virginia Department of Health, which provides additional insight about MRSA and its prevention. This can also be found on the Roanoke County Public Schools website, along with other information from the Department of Education. If you have questions, or require further information, please contact your school nurse or athletic trainer.

Sincerely,

Allen Jounell  
Assistant Superintendent of Administration

LaVern Davis  
Supervisor of Health Services

**Virginia Department of Health**  
**Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)**

**Questions and Answers**

**What is MRSA?**

*Staphylococcus aureus* (“staph”) is a common type of bacteria (germ) that is often found on the skin and in the nose of healthy people. It can also grow in wounds or other sites in the body, sometimes causing an infection. For example, staph is one of the most common causes of skin infections. Penicillin is a drug that was once commonly used to treat staph infections. However, over time many staph bacteria have become difficult to treat with penicillin and antibiotics related to penicillin. These new or resistant forms of *Staphylococcus aureus* are called methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA. The illnesses they cause are the same as those caused by other staph; the difference is in how they are treated.

**Who is at risk for getting these organisms?**

Just like normal staph bacteria, MRSA normally does not cause disease unless it enters an opening in the skin. However, some people are at higher risk for carrying MRSA or becoming infected with this type of staph. MRSA more often occurs in people in hospitals and healthcare facilities. It can also occur outside the hospital in people who receive multiple antibiotics, as well as in people who have close contact with a person carrying the germ or by touching objects contaminated with MRSA (e.g., clothes, towels, bedding, athletic equipment, benches in saunas or hot tubs, bandages).

**How are MRSA and other staph spread?**

Staph bacteria (including MRSA) are most often spread by close contact with infected people or the things they touch. It is not spread through the air.

**What are the symptoms of infection?**

Many people carry staph bacteria on their skin without any symptoms. Symptoms of a MRSA or other staph infection depend on where the infection is located. Infections of the skin are the most common, and cause symptoms such as redness, warmth, pus and a wound that does not heal. Your doctor may refer to these infections as boils, furuncles, impetigo, or abscesses. Infections can also develop in the blood, bone, bladder, lungs, and other sites. Symptoms there will depend on the site of infection, but include fever and pain at the site.

**What should I do if I think I have a MRSA or other staph infection?**

See your healthcare provider.

**Are MRSA and other staph infections treatable?**

Yes. Some staph skin infections can be treated simply by draining the sore and keeping the wound clean. For more serious infections, antibiotics can be used to treat those infections. If antibiotics are prescribed by your healthcare provider, it is very important to finish taking all the pills and to call your doctor if the infection does not get better.

**What can I do to prevent MRSA and other staph infections?**

- Wash your hands often, especially when you’re 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 isn’t healing, see a doctor.
- Don’t insist on antibiotics for colds or other viruses.
- If prescribed antibiotics, take all the pills, even if you feel better before they are all gone.