

VOORHEESVILLE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Clayton A. Bouton High School - Voorheesville Middle School

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To: Faculty, Staff, Parents and Community Members:

There have recently been cases of MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) reported in area school districts. MRSA is a staph infection that is resistant to certain types of antibiotic treatment. In an effort to be knowledgeable about and proactive in minimizing the spread of MRSA, the Voorheesville Central School District has been in contact with the Albany County Department of Health and has taken the following precautions:

At the high school level, the district has closed the weight room and is conducting a thorough cleaning and disinfection of all pads and mats in that room. The deck of the swimming pool has been and will continue to be disinfected before and immediately after all pool-related activities. In addition, the following steps will continue to be taken at both the elementary and high school/middle school facilities:

- Locker room benches and any areas where skin-to-skin contact may occur will be thoroughly disinfected on a regular basis.
- Physical education teachers have been advised to review hygiene and safety measures with all students.
- All students will be advised to bring physical education clothing home to be cleaned.
- Any towels and/or clothing left in the locker rooms will be bagged and disposed of.

In addition, the health department provided the district with background information regarding MRSA. It is contained on the page immediately following this letter.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me, Mr. Joseph Sapienza, Athletic Director; and/or Mrs. Mary Ann Jones, School Nurse.

Sincerely,

Mark Diefendorf
Principal

MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus)

What is MRSA?

Some staph bacteria are resistant to antibiotics. MRSA is a type of staph that is resistant to antibiotics called beta-lactams. Beta-lactam antibiotics include methicillin and other more common antibiotics such as oxacillin, penicillin and amoxicillin. While 25% to 30% of the population is colonized with staph, approximately 1% is colonized with MRSA.

Who gets staph or MRSA infections?

Staph infections, including MRSA, occur most frequently among persons in hospitals and healthcare facilities (such as nursing homes and dialysis centers) who have weakened immune systems. These healthcare-associated staph infections include surgical wound infections, urinary tract infections, bloodstream infections and pneumonia.

What is community-associated MRSA (CA-MRSA)?

Staph and MRSA can also cause illness in persons outside of hospitals and healthcare facilities. MRSA infections that are acquired by persons who have not been recently hospitalized (within the past year) or had a medical procedure (such as dialysis, surgery, catheters) are known as CA-MRSA infections. Staph or MRSA infections in the community are usually manifested as skin infections, such as pimples and boils, and occur in otherwise healthy people.

How common are staph and MRSA infections?

Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infection in the United States and are a common cause of pneumonia, surgical wound infections, and bloodstream infections. The majority of MRSA infections occur among patients in hospitals or other healthcare settings; however, it is becoming more common in the community setting. Data from a prospective study in 2003 suggests that 12% of clinical MRSA infections are community-associated, but this varies by geographic region and population.

What does a staph or MRSA infection look like?

Staph bacteria, including MRSA, can cause skin infections that may look like a pimple or boil and can be red, swollen, painful or have pus or other drainage. More serious infections may cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or surgical wound infections.

Are certain people at increased risk for community-associated staph or MRSA infections?

Factors that have been associated with the spread of MRSA skin infections include close skin-to-skin contact, openings in the skin such as cuts or abrasions, contaminated items and surfaces, crowded living conditions and poor hygiene.

How can I prevent staph or MRSA skin infections?

Practice good hygiene: 1.) Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer; 2.) Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed; 3.) Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages; 4.) Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.

Are staph and MRSA infections treatable?

Yes. Most staph and MRSA infections are treatable with antibiotics. If you are given an antibiotic, 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 unfinished antibiotics to use at another time. However, many staph skin infections may be treated by draining the abscess or boil and may not require antibiotics. Drainage of skin boils or abscesses should only be done by a healthcare provider. If after visiting your healthcare provider the infection is not getting better after a few days, contact them again. If other people you know or live with get the same infection, tell them to go to their healthcare provider.