

MRSA - Common Questions and Answers  
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Recent publicized deaths of school-aged children from MRSA have created a lot of concerns about the health and safety of our students. Valentine Community Schools and local health care providers would like to address some of the concerns. We have put together some information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other recognized health agencies we hope will be helpful. We hope to both answer questions and minimize public health risk from MRSA and other preventable infections.

### **What is MRSA?**

MRSA stands for Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus. MRSA can only be diagnosed by culture and laboratory testing. Staphylococcus Aureus, or staph, is a common bacterium that all people carry on their skin, while MRSA is a mutated form of staph that has developed resistance to some antibiotics. MRSA is sometimes called one of the "superbugs" by the media. HA-MRSA or "hospital-acquired" MRSA has been seen mainly in hospitals and in nursing homes in immuno-suppressed individuals. The more recent CA-MRSA, or "community-acquired" MRSA is the type the media is reporting. It occurs in otherwise healthy people.

### **What are the symptoms of MRSA?**

MRSA is a type of staph, so the symptoms of a MRSA infection and the symptoms of an infection due to other forms of staph are often the same. Pimples, rashes, pus-filled boils, especially when warm, painful, red or swollen, can indicate a staph. infection. MRSA can also cause more serious infections when colonized in surgical wounds, the bloodstream, or body organs. The symptoms could include high fever, swelling, heat and pain around the wound, headaches, fatigue, and in worst cases, death.

### **How is MRSA spread?**

MRSA is usually spread by skin-to-skin contact or contact with shared items or surfaces that have been in contact with the bacteria.

### **How is MRSA treated?**

The key is early and effective treatment. Most MRSA infections are treated by good wound and skin care, preventing the spread of the bacteria, allowing the body to heal, and sometimes requires the use of culture-selected antibiotics. Some cases respond to oral antibiotics, some may require outpatient IV antibiotic therapy, and on occasion, hospitalization.

### **What is the school doing to prevent the spread of MRSA and other infectious skin infections?**

The administration, teaching staff, coaching staff, janitorial staff and school nurses are working together by:

- Teaching and encouraging good hand washing and other infection control measures
- Discouraging the sharing of personal items
- Encouraging personal hygiene
- Having effective cleansers, sanitizers, and gloves readily available
- Educating the student body, parents and staff
- Referring any questionable skin ailments to health care providers

### **Is MRSA in our community?**

MRSA is in every community. Although the media has publicized the most serious cases, most staph and MRSA infections are treated on an outpatient basis and are never reported.

### **Should a student with MRSA skin infection be excluded from school?**

If a student has an open, draining, untreated wound they will be excluded from school and school activities. The student's physician will determine when and for how long a student should be excluded from school and school activities.

### **Will the school staff and public know if there is a case in the school?**

No. Isolated cases will not be reported to the public or school personnel by the health care community due to federal confidentiality regulations. In the case of an outbreak, local health officials will release necessary information to keep the public informed.

### **Who should I go to for reliable information?**

If you have questions or concerns, contact your primary health care provider, the Department of Health and Human Services, or the CDC.

Sources: CDC website, DHHS website, local health care clinics.