

Staphylococcus/MRSA Infections

Staphylococcus aureus, or staph is a common germ that many people carry in their nasal passages, under fingernails or on their skin with no ill effects. Since staph is spread primarily by direct (skin-to-skin) human contact or with direct contact to wound drainage of someone who is carrying or infected with the bacteria, anyone with a break in his or her skin is at risk.

Staph infections begin abruptly. Symptoms may include a large area of redness on the skin, swelling and pain, followed by a pustule or abscess or boils and carbuncles (red, lumpy sores filled with pus). If left untreated, staph can infect blood and bones, causing severe illness that requires hospitalization.

Methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a type of staph that has developed antibiotic resistance (certain antibiotics are unable to kill the bacteria).

The spread of staph infections are by direct contact; however, it can also be spread indirectly by contact with materials and clothing from an infected area. Students and their family members should take the following precautions to help prevent skin infections:

- Encourage frequent hand washing with soap and warm water.
- Encourage students to keep their fingernails clean and clipped short.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or anything contaminated by a wound.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as razors, towels, deodorant, or soap that directly touches the body.
- Clean and disinfect objects (such as gym and sports equipment) before use.
- Wash dirty clothes, linens, and towels with hot water and laundry detergent. Using hot dryer, rather than air-drying, also helps kill bacteria.
- Encourage students who participate in contact sports to shower immediately after each practice, game, or match with soap and water.
- Keep open or draining sores and lesions clean and covered.
- Anyone assisting with wound care should wear gloves and wash their hands with soap and water after dressing changes.

We encourage you to be vigilant in looking for signs and symptoms of staph infections. If you or any member of your family exhibit symptoms as described above, you are encouraged to contact your family doctor. Additional information about staph and MRSA can be found at <http://www.mrsatexas.org>