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Dear Parents:

The district wants you to be aware of a health issue that recently has received considerable attention in the media and is understandably a concern for parents.

The infection is called Methicillin-Resistant Staph Aureus or MRSA. The skin condition most commonly looks like an infected pimple or boil and can worsen to include redness, warmth, swelling, pain, and discharge. It can be mistaken as a spider or insect bite. MRSA can spread by skin-to-skin contact, contact with drainage from the nose of a person infected, or contact with contaminated objects such as razors, soap, clothing, or towels.

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 an 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.

As a district, we are also taking steps to help prevent MRSA infection, including education of staff and student athletes. Early treatment of suspected MRSA is important. If you are concerned about a wound or sore on your child, please consult your health care provider.

Respectfully,

Joan McIntyre
Supervisor of Health Services

Fact Sheet

Methicillin-Resistant Staph Aureus (MRSA)

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

Need more information?

If you have any questions about your condition, please **ask your doctor**. More information can be found at the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** website.