

# **BISHOP GUILFOYLE**

H I G H S C H O O L

2400 PLEASANT VALLEY BOULEVARD  
ALTOONA, PENNSYLVANIA 16602-3499

Dear Parents/Guardians:

This letter is to provide information regarding the response of the Bishop Guilfoyle High School Athletic Department in the prevention of MRSA (Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus), which has become a problem for some schools in the eastern United States including Pennsylvania. Whereas educators are not medical experts, we have consulted with qualified medical professionals who have advised us as follows:

*"It is important for everyone to realize that community acquired MRSA has been prevalent for many years, and recently has been noted to be quite widespread. We are carrying it on our skin, but only become infected when the bacteria invades our skin through hair follicles, lacerations, abrasions or other out breaks in our skin barrier. Community acquired MRSA victims develop minor skin infections or abscesses. A small minority may develop more severe infections."*

While our school does not have reported cases, we want to be proactive rather than reactive. We have received information from the Pennsylvania Department of health and from the Office of Community Health that has been extremely helpful to us in our goal of prevention. We have plans in place to institute the following preventive measures:

- Information has been added to our website as an additional resource for parents and students. That information is enclosed for your reference.
- Information from the Pennsylvania Department of Health has been forwarded to all employees.
- Hand sanitizer stations will be added at the high school, focusing on the cafeteria and athletic areas.
- Cleaning staff members will continue to disinfect surfaces such as door knobs, handles, desks and tables.
- Bottles of disinfectant have been placed in the weight room and students have been instructed to wear shirts when using the equipment, to shower after practices or events, and to remove athletic clothing daily to be washed. Reminders are posted in athletic areas. Students have been notified that clothing left in the locker room will be discarded.
- Each student athlete will be given an individual size bottle of hand sanitizer to start practices and carry with them to away games. Additional bottles may be purchased from the athletic department at a cost of \$2.00.
- Announcements have been running in our building encouraging students to wash hands and take advantage of the hand sanitizing stations.
- Information will be relayed to teachers and students regarding the precautionary steps that they can use to prevent illness.

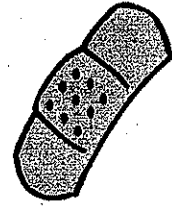
Please remind your children that the best defense is **HAND WASHING** with **SOAP** and **WATER**. While we are taking this situation very seriously, it is important to note that currently we are not aware of any cases of MRSA in our school. If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Mr. Robert M Gervinski, Principal  
Bishop Guilfoyle High School

ACCREDITED BY THE MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

# What every parent should know about MRSA



## **What is MRSA?**

- Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a bacterium that causes infections in different parts of the body. It is tougher to treat than most strains of Staphylococcus aureus – or Staph – because it's immune to some commonly used antibiotics.

## **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.

## **Who gets MRSA? *Anyone!...including otherwise healthy, school-aged children.***

- The following increases one's chance of contracting MRSA:
  - Skin-to-skin contact with someone who has MRSA
  - Contact with items and surfaces that have MRSA on them
  - Openings in their skin such as cuts or scrapes
  - Crowded living conditions (such as dormitories)
  - Athletes participating in contact sports
  - Poor hygiene

## **How is MRSA spread?**

- MRSA is almost always spread by direct physical contact with the bacteria. This may include contact with an infected person or by touching objects contaminated with the bacteria, such as towels, sheets, wound dressings, hands, clothes or sports equipment. MRSA can survive for long periods (as much as 2-weeks) on everyday surfaces if the surface is not disinfected.

## **How do I know if my child has MRSA?**

- MRSA skin infections often look like a spider bite in the early stage. If your child has a red, swollen, painful skin lesion that has pus or other drainage he/she should be seen by a healthcare professional.

## **Should a child with a MRSA skin infection be allowed to attend school?**

- Yes, as long as the wound can be covered with a clean, dry dressing.

## **How serious is MRSA?**

- Most isolated MRSA skin infections are minor and may be easily treated.
- MRSA also may cause more serious infections, such as infections of the bloodstream, surgical sites, or pneumonia.
- It is important to contact your doctor if your infection does not get better.

## **How are MRSA infections treated?**

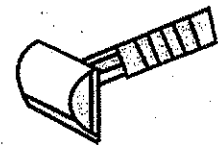
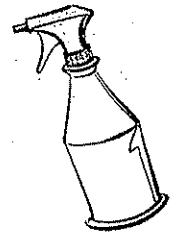
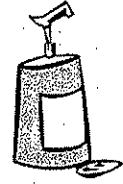
- The best treatment is drainage of any abscess or wound. Warm compresses may be ordered to facilitate the drainage of the wound.
- An antibiotic may be prescribed. Many physicians do NOT treat simple, isolated MRSA infections with antibiotics as it facilitates newer strains of MRSA that will be harder to treat in the future. If an antibiotic is prescribed, be sure to take all of the antibiotics even if the wound has healed.

## **How do I keep MRSA 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.
- Athletes should not participate in play if they have open, draining wounds that cannot be covered and drainage contained.
- Athletes should shower after practice or games and wash uniforms after all events.
- Do not share personal items like towels or razors.

## What Athletes Should Know to Prevent MRSA

- Showering with soap after every practice or tournament. In team locations where soap is often shared, switch to a liquid soap.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, or uniforms.
- Never wipe your face with a towel used on athletic equipment.
- Avoid sharing balms, lubricants, and moisturizers.
- Wash uniforms, clothes, towels, and sheets that become soiled with water and laundry detergent. Drying clothes in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying, also helps kill bacteria in clothes.
- Non-washable gear (e.g. head protectors), should be wiped down with a phenol or chlorine based wipe such as liquid Lysol after each use.
- Athletic equipment such as wrestling or gymnastics mats should be wiped down regularly with an antibacterial solution such as diluted Liquid Lysol.
- Lockers and benches should be sanitized on a regular basis using disinfectant cleaners.
- Do not share whirlpools with other team members.
- Whirlpools in athletic rooms must be emptied and disinfected between uses.
- Do not shave body skin for wound care or cosmetic reasons.



## **Prevention of the spread of MRSA in the school setting**

Studies have shown that MRSA is capable of prolonged survival on everyday surfaces, therefore the following is recommended:

### **Prevention for the Spread of MRSA in Day Care and Primary School**

#### **Environments:**

- Cots, toys and diaper cleaning changing surfaces should be cleaned and sanitized thoroughly on a regular basis with a phenol or chlorine wipe such as liquid Lysol.
- Parents and children should wash hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer immediately upon entering the facility or classroom in the morning or after outside play.
- Cuts and scrapes should be cleaned with soap and water and covered with a bandage until healed. Caregivers should always use gloves when applying or changing bandages and wash hands immediately afterwards.
- At school, children should not be permitted to share personal items such as blankets, mats, or clothing.

### **Prevention for the Spread of MRSA in Secondary School and Athletic**

#### **Environments:**

- Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Use the 15 second rule while washing hands, this is just enough time to sing the alphabet or birthday song.
- Avoid sharing personal and skin care items such as clothing and balms or moisturizers.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages, and wash hands immediately after changing a bandage.
- Seek medical attention immediately if a wound does not heal properly or appears to be infected.
- Students and teachers should be encouraged to report known or suspected MRSA infections to the school nurse.
- It is recommended that computer keyboards be disinfected daily for 5 seconds with chlorine or phenol based wipe such as liquid Lysol.

### **Prevention for the Spread of MRSA in Athletic Environments:**

- Showering with soap after every practice or tournament. In team locations where soap is often shared, switch to a liquid soap.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, or uniforms.
- Never wipe your face with a towel used on athletic equipment.
- Avoid sharing balms, lubricants, and moisturizers.
- Wash uniforms, clothes, towels, and sheets that become soiled with water and laundry detergent. Drying clothes in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying, also helps kill bacteria in clothes.
- Non-washable gear (e.g. head protectors), should be wiped down with a phenol or chlorine based wipe such as liquid Lysol after each use.
- Athletic equipment such as wrestling or gymnastics mats should be wiped down regularly with an antibacterial solution such as diluted Liquid Lysol.
- Lockers and benches should be sanitized on a regular basis using disinfectant cleaners containing phenol or chlorine.
- Do not share whirlpools with other team members.
- Whirlpools in athletic rooms must be emptied and disinfected between uses.
- Do not shave body skin for wound care or cosmetic reasons.

Source: Adapted from <http://www.union.k12.ky.us/staphi/MRSA%20in%20Schools.pdf>