



Super Bugs

It is impossible to ignore the news stories surrounding student illnesses caused by MRSA. **Methicillin Resistant Staph Aureus** is a strain of *s. aureus* that is resistant to methicillin, an antibiotic in the same class as penicillin.

MRSA is traditionally seen as a nosocomial or hospital acquired infection. CA-MRSA or Community Associated-MRSA infections are now being found in healthy people who have not been hospitalized or had any medical procedure within the past year. Outbreaks have been seen among athletes, military recruits, and day care attendees – any group of people who live in crowded settings or routinely share contaminated items. CA-MRSA is transmitted mainly through person to person contact or contact with a contaminated item such as a towel, clothing or athletic equipment. It is highly possible to infect a small pre-existing cut not protected by a dressing or other bandage.

CAREFUL HAND WASHING is the single most effective way to control the spread of CA-MRSA. Any skin break, cut or infection should be covered until healed. Personal items that may be contaminated (towels, razors, clothing, etc.) should not be shared. Both the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) have issued recommendations for preventing the spread of MRSA among athletes. These include showering after practices and competitions and not sharing personal items. Athletes who participate in sports where equipment is often collectively used are encouraged to reduce sharing as much as possible and to regularly wipe down mats/equipment with commercial disinfectants or one (1) tablespoon of bleach to one (1) quart of water.

Frequent hand washing at home and school is a valuable life lesson for our students. Health teach your student to wash their hands before eating or preparing food, after handling soiled items, blowing their nose or using the bathroom.

While we can't protect them from every "bug" crawling around out there, good hand washing techniques will go a long way in preventing many infections.