

Staph infections and skin care

Staphylococcus aureus, called “staph,” is a common bacterium that lives on the skin or in the nasal passages of healthy people. When a break in the skin occurs, that can lead to a skin infection. The type of staph that causes concern is one that is resistant to antibiotics, often referred to as “MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staph Aureus).” MRSA can be serious because it is not easily treated with antibiotics. It is generally acquired in a hospital or health care facility, but now there is a “community acquired” MRSA that is a concern.

Symptoms: Staph infections often appear like a pimple or boil—they may be red, tender, swollen, and might have pus or other drainage. It is a good idea to have your doctor evaluate such places to determine if there is a need for treatment.

Risk factors: Close skin-to-skin contact, poor hygiene (particularly failing to shower after exercising), open cuts or abrasions, sharing contaminated items such as razors or towels, and contact with contaminated surfaces.

Prevention:

- Good hygiene—washing hands with soap and water or using antibacterial gel; showering after workouts to minimize exposure to staph
- Keep cuts or scrapes covered until they heal—if the area cannot be covered, the person may need to remain home from school until their doctor determines them to no longer be contagious
- Avoid contact with other people’s wounds
- Don’t share personal items, such as razors or towels
- Clean surfaces in the house to prevent transmission between family members

At school, we encourage students to practice good hygiene, especially after P.E. class or sports practices. Our staff uses special antibacterial cleansers to disinfect equipment and locker room areas. Please feel free to call the school nurse if you have questions or concerns:

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For more information, the CDC website has good resources:

<http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/index.html>

Also, the Indiana State Department of Health site has a section of quick facts:

<http://www.in.gov/isdh/24516.htm>

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