

November 5, 2007

Dear Parents,

In light of recent media coverage concerning MRSA, USD 409 is providing parents with the following information as a precautionary and proactive approach to combat this disease.

USD 409 is following recommendations as outlined by the Centers for Disease Control for prevention and spread of MRSA in the school setting. Disinfectants used by our custodial staff are on the EPA list of products that are effective against MRSA. Custodians are being informed of effective cleaning procedures as precautionary measures to prevent the disease.

USD 409 will follow Kansas Regulation KSA 65-122, which requires exclusion from school attendance any child affected with a disease suspected of being infectious or contagious...until determined by a physician that the child may return to school. As recommended by CDC, school and public health officials will review the confirmed cases of MRSA. Notification to parents will be made according to their recommendation.

What is MRSA?

MRSA (Methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus) is a kind of bacteria or “staph” that is resistant to some kinds of antibiotics. It is similar to other staph infections in almost every other way. At any given time, 20-50% of the general population is colonized with staph bacteria and are not ill or infected; some may be MRSA, while others are not. Sometimes, though, staph can cause an infection, especially pimples, boils, and other problems with the skin. These infections often contain pus, and may feel itchy and warm. Occasionally, staph cause more serious infections.

Who Gets MRSA?

MRSA was primarily seen in the hospital setting among sick and elderly people. Cases of MRSA are being seen in the community outside the hospital setting since the 1990’s. People are more likely to get an infection if they have:

1. Skin to skin contact with the hands, wound drainage, or nasal secretions of a person who is infected or colonized with MRSA
2. Openings in their skin such as cuts or abrasions
3. Poor hygiene
4. Participate in a contact sport

What are the symptoms of a skin infection?

1. Tenderness, redness, or swelling
2. Area is warm to touch
3. Fever
4. Purulent drainage (pus)
5. May look like a spider bite, pimple, or boil

How is MRSA diagnosed?

The only way to tell the difference between MRSA and other staph infections is with a wound culture performed by your doctor or laboratory testing.

How can I prevent infections?**HAND WASHING IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT BEHAVIOR IN PREVENTING INFECTIOUS DISEASE OF ANY ORIGIN****Educate family members to:**

1. **Wash hands with soap and water for at least 15 seconds (or use 60% alcohol-based sanitizer) Recite the alphabet or sing “Happy Birthday” while washing hands**
2. **Wash hands after sneezing, blowing or touching one’s nose.**
3. **Wash hands after using the toilet.**
4. **Wash hands before and after a game or practice.**
5. **Wash hands after touching and/or caring for a break in the skin.**

Other precautions:

1. Shower with soap and water as soon as possible after direct contact sports.
2. Dry using a clean dry towel.
3. Do **NOT** share equipment, towels, soap, razors or any personal care items.
4. Do **NOT** share ointments, creams, or antibiotics
5. Keep hands away from the nose, mouth and eyes
6. Keep all skin wounds covered on all 4 sides with a bandage.
7. Wash towels, equipment, practice uniforms and any other laundry in hot water and detergent.
8. Keep skin healthy, and avoid getting dry, cracked skin, especially during the winter.
9. Students should report a skin rash, boil, abrasion, cut, spider bite or turf burn promptly to the athletic trainer/coach/school nurse, or parent.

Care and Treatment of a Bacterial Infection

1. Seek medical care if a wound is not healing, and especially if it is warm, painful, red or swollen or draining pus.
2. Tell your doctor if your student is an athlete as he/she might take a wound culture.
3. Take all antibiotics as prescribed by your doctor, even if the infection seems to have healed.
4. Inform your doctor if the wound is not improving.
5. Keep the area clean and dry.
6. Keep the wound covered on all 4 sides at all times until completely healed.
7. Bring a doctor’s note to the school office indicating diagnosis and when student may return to school and participate in athletics.

Please contact your health care provider, the Atchison County Health Department, or the school nurses if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Deborah Eplee RN and Janelle Carrigan RN