



SUMTER COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

"Preparing the next generation today"

Richard A. Shirley
Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Parent or Guardian:

Recently there have been many news reports throughout the state about bacterial skin infections, called Methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), within the school community.

MRSA is a type of *Staphylococcus aureus* (staph) infection that is resistant to some antibiotics and has been around for many years. In the past, MRSA has been found almost entirely in healthcare settings; however increasingly in recent years MRSA has also been found in the community. This includes settings such as jails, certain workplaces, daycare centers, schools, and fitness centers. In the community, most MRSA infections are skin infections. Most of these infections are easily treatable with antibiotics.

It is important to remember that while public health officials have documented an increase in resistant staph infections over the years, the rate of serious life threatening infections is lowest among children. MRSA is not a disease that primarily affects children or the school system and outbreaks of MRSA in schools are rare, except among athletic teams where close person-to-person contact may occur.

Symptoms of a MRSA infection may include pustules or boils which often are red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. We encourage you to look for signs and symptoms of staph infections in yourself and your children, and to contact your medical provider if you are concerned.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Staph infections, including MRSA, occur most frequently among persons where the 5 C's may be present: Crowding, Contact (Frequent skin-to-skin), Compromised skin (i.e., cuts or abrasions), Contaminated items and surfaces, and Lack of Cleanliness.

Frequent hand washing is the single most important preventive measure to avoid infection with MRSA and many other diseases. Lather hands with plain soap and water-using adequate friction for up to 20 seconds before preparing food or eating, and after using the bathroom, blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing and handling animals, blood or other body fluids.

The Florida Department of Health highlights the following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended precautions:

- Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors
- Avoid unnecessary use of antibiotics -- see the Florida Get Smart Program at: http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctr/epi/FGS/FL_GetSmart_Antibiotic_Use.html

Additional material can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/MRSAinSchools/>.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Shirley,
Superintendent of Schools

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