

FLORIDA HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Volume 1, Issue 6

Summer 2007

PROTECTING STUDENTS AND STAFF FROM METHICILLIN RESISTANT STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS

Methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), a potentially serious infection, historically found in health-care settings is now commonly found in community settings such as daycare centers, schools and fitness centers. This new, more dangerous form of staph is called community-associated MRSA. Teachers, coaches, daycare providers and parents must be informed in order to protect their students, families and themselves from this bacteria. Young children and athletes are at particular risk.

MRSA can live in the nasal passages of otherwise healthy people and be transmitted to others through person to person contact or sharing of personal items such as towels, razors, sheets, sports equipment and clothing.

The following information was reprinted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. For more information go to: <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/acd/diseases/mrsa/mrsa.shtml>.

What is MRSA (Methicillin-

resistant Staphylococcus aureus)? Some staph bacteria are resistant to antibiotics. MRSA is a type of staph that is resistant to antibiotics called beta-lactams. Beta-lactam antibiotics include Methicillin and other more common antibiotics such as oxacillin, penicillin and amoxicillin. While 25% to 30% of the population is colonized with staph, approximately 1% is colonized with MRSA.

Who gets staph or MRSA infections? Staph infections, including MRSA, occur most frequently among persons in hospitals and healthcare facilities (such as nursing homes and dialysis centers) who have weakened immune systems. These healthcare-associated staph infections include surgical wound infections, urinary tract infections, bloodstream infections and pneumonia.

What is community-associated MRSA (CA-MRSA)? Staph and MRSA



can also cause illness in persons outside of hospitals and healthcare facilities. MRSA infections that are acquired by persons who **have not** been recently (within the past year) hospitalized or had a medical procedure (such as dialysis, surgery, catheters) are known as CA-MRSA infections. Staph or MRSA infections in the community are usually manifested as skin infections, such as pimples and boils, and occur in otherwise healthy people.

How common are staph and MRSA infections? Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infection in the United States and are a common cause of pneumonia, surgical wound infections, and bloodstream infections. The majority of MRSA infections occur

Inside this issue:

MRSA	1-2
Pinellas Employee Wellness Program	3
Upcoming Events	3
Viera High School Health Education Project	4

among patients in hospitals or other healthcare settings; however, it is becoming more common in community settings. Data from a prospective study in 2003, suggests that 12% of clinical MRSA infections are community-associated, but this varies by geographic region and population.

What does a staph or MRSA infection look like? Staph bacteria, including MRSA, can cause skin infections that may look like a pimple or boil and can be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. More serious infections may cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or surgical wound infections.

MRSA CONTINUED

Are certain people at increased risk for community associated staph or CA-MRSA infections? CDC has investigated clusters of CA-MRSA skin infections among athletes, military recruits, prisoners, children, Pacific Islanders, Alaskan Natives, Native Americans, men who have sex with men, and prisoners.

Can I get a staph or MRSA infection at my health club? In the outbreaks of MRSA, the environment has not played a significant role in the transmission of MRSA. MRSA is transmitted most frequently by direct skin-to-skin contact. You can protect yourself from infections by practicing good hygiene (e.g., keeping your hands clean by washing with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand rub and showering after working out); covering any open skin area such as abrasions or cuts with a clean dry bandage; avoiding sharing personal items such as towels or razors; using a barrier (e.g., clothing or a towel) between your skin and shared equipment; and wiping surfaces of equipment before and after use.

What should I do if I think I have a staph or MRSA infection? See your healthcare provider. If you are given an antibiotic, take all of the doses, even if the infection is getting better, unless your doctor tells you to stop taking it. Do not share antibiotics with other people or save unfinished antibiotics to use at another time.

Are staph and MRSA infections treatable? Yes. Most staph and MRSA infections are treatable with antibiotics. However, many staph skin infections may be treated by draining the abscess or boil and may not require antibiotics. Drainage of skin boils or abscesses should only be done by a healthcare provider. If after visiting your healthcare provider the infection is not getting better after a few days, contact them again. If other people you know or live with get the same infection tell them to go to their healthcare provider.

Is it possible that my staph or MRSA skin infection will come back after it is cured? Yes. It is possible to have a staph or MRSA skin infection come back (recur) after it is cured. To prevent this from happening, follow your healthcare provider's directions while you have the infection, and follow the prevention steps after the infection is gone.

YOU CAN PREVENT STAPH OR CA-MRSA SKIN INFECTIONS BY FOLLOWING THESE STEPS:

- **Clean your hands.** Washing with soap and warm water several times a day is the best way to avoid infection. Teach children to wash their hands under running water for at least 15 seconds. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers when water is not available.
- **Do not share personal items.** Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, or uniforms that may have had contact with the infected wound or bandage. Wash soiled sheets, towels, and clothes with hot water and laundry detergent. Drying clothes in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying, also helps kill bacteria in clothes.
- **Sanitize gym clothing and linens.** Wash sports clothing and washable athletic gear with laundry detergent after each use. Drying laundry in a hot dryer also helps kill bacteria.
- **Talk to your doctor.** If you have a skin infection that causes a boil or pus-filled pimple or becomes an abscess seek a doctor's advise.
- **Clean shared equipment often.** Shared sports equipment, gym mats, toys and nap mats should be cleaned with an antibacterial solution after use.
- **Cover any wounds.** Keep wounds that are draining or have pus covered with clean, dry bandages. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions on proper care of the wound. Pus from infected wounds can contain staph and MRSA, so keeping the infection covered will help prevent the spread to others. Bandages or tape can be discarded with the regular trash.

Up Coming Opportunity! Body Mass Index data collection and data management survey and opportunity for school districts to receive professional evaluation reports of local data for use in planning interventions, wellness policy evaluation and grant applications. More information to follow.

Pinellas County Wellness Champions

The Pinellas County Health Department's **Florida on the Move in Pinellas County** program has partnered with the Pinellas County School Board's employee wellness program. The mission of **Florida on the Move Pinellas County** is to develop and put into action chronic disease prevention strategies. These strategies address risk factors related to obesity and inactivity through improved nutrition and weight management, increased physical activity, and decreased tobacco use. The goals are attainable through local partnerships and the gathering together of community resources to address these matters at schools, work sites, churches and other organizations.



Pinellas County School's **Be Smart** wellness program was uniquely designed to recruit employees to serve as "Wellness Champions" from every elementary school in the county. These Wellness Champions are staff and faculty who are health advocates with the enthusiasm and energy needed to encourage other staff and faculty within their schools to get active and lead healthy lives. The duties of the Wellness Champions include planning and coordinating programs at the individual locations based upon program priorities. Champions are given creative freedom, allowing them to tailor the programs to the staff at their school. Pinellas County School District

hosted a seminar to provide resources to the Wellness Champions related to the program's key focus areas: Nutrition and Weight Loss, Exercise and Fitness, Stress and Depression, Healthy Heart, Migraines and Headaches, and Smoking Cessation. At the seminar **Florida on the Move in Pinellas County** presented their web based program that promotes "small changes equal big results." The program allows individuals to track their walking steps and other physical activity and provides nutritional tips and encouragement. The 100 Mile Club was also introduced. The 100 Mile Club was formed through a partnership with the Pinellas County Health Department and the Pinellas County Parks and Recreation Department. The program provides incentives of a T-shirt and certificate of accomplishment to those who log 100 miles. In addition to the physical activity programs, Florida on the Move provides nutritional education courses to Wellness Champions and their schools throughout the year.

Commonalities within the Pinellas school-based programs include: pedometer walking challenges, walking clubs, and access to nutritional lunches through a salad bar. One success story came from a Wellness Champion who conducted a pedometer walking challenge that resulted in staff completing over 14 million steps, equal to over 7,000 miles, in 5 weeks. In addition, several Wellness Champions received word that many of their program participants have lost 10 or more pounds as a result of the school's wellness program.

This wellness program has proven to be a success for Pinellas County Schools and there are now over 100 Wellness Champions in the county. In an effort to sustain the program and impact many more staff and faculty to pursue healthier lifestyles, Pinellas County Schools has decided to incorporate the Wellness Champions Program into the new school wellness policy entitled **Be SMART**, pending school board approval. Pinellas County School District highly values the health and well-being of every staff member and has been working hard to implement activities and policies that support their efforts to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This is in direct alignment with the mission and focus of **Florida on the Move in Pinellas County**, thus creating an excellent partnership.

Submitted by Lisa Ross, School Coordinator, Pinellas County Schools Steps to a Healthier FL/Pinellas Grant

Calendar of Upcoming Events in 2007:

October 3-5	Prevention Conference www.preventioninflorida.org	Orlando
October 29-30	Attendance Symposium http://sss.usf.edu/attendancesymposium/2007/index.html	St. Petersburg
Nov. 1-4	FAHPERDS www.fahperd.org/	Orlando
November 7-10	Florida Association of School Psychologists http://www.fasp.org/	Daytona

If you would like your upcoming events posted in the summer newsletter, please send the information to carol_vickers@doh.state.fl.us by December 10th, 2007.

Florida's Coordinated School Health Program

Your CSHP Staff Contacts

DOE Director	Penny Detscher	850-245-5089
DOH Director	Carol Vickers	850-245-4330
Assistant Director	Dr. Antionette Meeks	850-245-0480
Physical Education	Nichole Wilder	850-245-0480
HIV/AIDS Prevention	Ksena Zipperer	850-245-9952
Healthy Schools	Kari King	850-245-5094
Resource Center	Eileen Smith	850-245-0978
DOH Physical Activity, Nutrition and Tobacco	Erica Douglas	850-245-4330



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
www.fldoe.org



E-mail your success stories and upcoming events to carol_vickers@doh.state.fl.us



The Florida Coordinated School Health Program is a partnership between the Departments of Education and Health funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Viera High School Demonstrates Commitment to Providing Health Education

In the current environment of competing priorities, it is often challenging to identify opportunities to deliver vital health information in schools. Committed groups around the state are working to develop resources and strategies to support the integration of health education in core curricular areas.

Health Education is a planned, sequential, K-12 curriculum that addresses the physical, mental, emotional and social dimensions of health. The curriculum is designed to motivate and assist students to maintain and improve their health, prevent disease, and reduce health-related risk behaviors. It allows students to develop and demonstrate increasingly sophisticated health-related knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices.

A comprehensive health education curriculum includes a variety of topics such as personal health, family health, community health, con-

sumer health, environmental health, sexuality education, mental and emotional health, injury prevention and safety, nutrition, prevention and control of disease, and substance use and abuse.

Viera High School in Brevard County provided health education lessons 10 minutes a day three times a week throughout the school year. The principal and health teacher wanted to integrate health messages into the school day. All students at the school (9th and 10th grade) were given a survey and asked to identify their top 5 health topic areas of interest. The data was compiled with assistance from parents and used to determine the chosen materials.

The health teacher downloaded free video clips from the internet from websites such as www.healthology.com, www.webmd.com, www.PBSNova.com, HRMvideo.com, and popular news websites like CNN and MSNBC.

On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays during advisor/advisee time (1st period), teachers showed the designated video clip about a teen health issue in the classroom. Discussion questions and other lesson plan materials were provided to the faculty to utilize with their students at that time. The video clip and accompanying information was emailed to the teachers. Students often discussed the topic further with the health education teacher.

Developers of the project recommend that the concept be presented at the beginning of the year at a faculty meeting and that administrators show support by emphasizing the importance of its implementation. For more information on this project contact Valerie Harville, Health Education Coordinator at Brevard School District.