

IMPORTANT HEALTH ALERT

Although we have had no reported cases of MRSA or any other reason for alarm, please know that at Hamburg School, we are addressing this issue by increasing our cleaning, disinfecting, and other preventative efforts throughout our school building and facility.

In addition, in light of the recent reports of cases of Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in New Jersey, we would like to provide some basic guidance and answers related to MRSA.

Staphylococcus aureus ("staph") infections have been around for a long time, causing mild to severe illness. MRSA is a kind of staph infection that may be more difficult to treat but is otherwise the same as a "staph infection". Mild infections 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.

Staph is passed from person to person through direct contact with skin or through contact with contaminated items. The bacteria may live in people's noses and on their skin and most of the time do not cause any problem. Staph can enter the body through breaks in the skin and sometimes cause infection. The main ways to prevent staph infection are to wash hands and care for wounds properly.

Most staph infections including those caused by MRSA are treatable by antibiotics. Please check with your healthcare provider for his or her recommendations.

Practical Advice for Parents

- Clean wounds and cover them with a clean, dry bandage. Wounds that do not heal need medical attention. The only way to determine if an infection is caused by MRSA through laboratory testing ordered by a physician or other health care provider.
- Teach children to wash their hands regularly, such as before eating and after toileting. http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/home_work_school.htm for additional information (including posters) on how to stop the spread of germs at home, work and school.
- Be sure your family members use antibiotics properly. Take all that are prescribed, the symptoms stop before the prescription is used up. Do not share prescriptions.
- Children who participate in sporting events should wash their hands after each practice game. They should not share equipment, uniforms, towels, or other personal items (razors). Wash uniforms and towels with hot water and detergent after each use.

More information regarding MRSA including educational materials and guidelines for school, correctional, and health care settings can be found at the NJDHSS website at <http://nj.gov/health/cd/mrsa/index.shtml>.