



Community Health Services

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October 22, 2007

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Cases of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) may occur in the schools in Tompkins County. The Tompkins County Health Department (TCHD) works with any involved schools to minimize any risk to children and to school employees. Because of the wide-spread attention to MRSA in the media recently, school superintendents and the TCHD feel that it is important that all families be provided with the same information about the infection and about measures to take to prevent this infection.

Staphylococcus aureus (aka staph) is a bacterium that frequently causes skin infections. MRSA is a strain of staph that is resistant to certain antibiotics. MRSA was identified more than 40 years ago and has been increasing in frequency around the country.

Staph infections are usually spread from person to person by close skin-to-skin contact, usually through contaminated hands. Community-acquired MRSA (CA-MRSA) most commonly causes skin infections (pimple, boil, or pustule) but can sometimes also cause more significant soft tissue infections (furuncle or cellulites). If medical treatment is indicated and an appropriate antibiotic is prescribed, almost all superficial skin infections heal. MRSA skin infections are usually *not* worse than typical staph infections in previously healthy school children. If you have any concerns about your child's health, you should contact your health care provider.

The simplest and most important measure to prevent the spread of staph infections is to use good personal hygiene, which consists of hand washing, proper care of skin injuries and skin infections, and avoiding sharing personal items such as razors, headgear, and towels. Children who do have MRSA infections should be allowed to go to school as long as they are not ill and as long as the wound can be fully covered by bandages. **The Health Department recommends that students with diagnosed MRSA in a skin infection check in with the school nurse upon return to school for clearance to participate in gym and sports.** Environmental clean up is rarely indicated.

We have included with this letter the New York State Department of Health CA-MRSA fact sheets. We will continue to work with school districts to investigate any outbreaks that may occur and to distribute educational materials to curb the spread of these persistent infections.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alice Cole".

Alice Cole, RN, M.S.E.
Public Health Director

Enc.



Your Partner for a Healthy Community

Maternal Child Unit
274-6604

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