

A few weeks ago the Communicable Disease Program Coordinator for the Washtenaw County Public Health Department forwarded to school nurses by e-mail some links to useful reference material about MRSA. This information provided general guidance to assist with the development of MRSA protocols in school settings.

Our Communicable Disease Program Coordinator has received a number of calls, and we are aware that there remains a degree of community concern about MRSA.

We continue to strongly recommend the guidance provided in the reference links on our MRSA website:

http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/public_health/news/07_mersa_3

We also recommend using the following fact sheet to educate parents, teachers and other staff members about MRSA:

http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/public_health/phcontent/cd_fact_sheets/mrsa.pdf

As your school district reviews or draws up a MRSA Protocol, there are some principles to keep in mind.

1. It is not realistic or possible to completely eradicate all Staph contamination and infections. At any given time, between 20 to 30 per cent of people will carry Staph in their nasal passages or on their skin without being ill. These people are said to be “colonized” by the Staph bacteria. Some will never get ill, but can pass the bacteria to others. Others can and will go on to develop infections that range from boils and abscesses to life-threatening pneumonias or bloodstream infections.
2. The existing routine environmental cleaning and disinfection schedules that each school district maintains are probably adequate, but should be reviewed in light of expert guidance found in the recommended website references, and in particular, with regard to surfaces and sports equipment.
3. Hand-washing and good personal hygiene continue to be the most important actions for everyone, and can reduce the transmission of other viruses and bacteria in addition to Staph bacteria.
4. A protocol regarding exclusion criteria should respect adherence to proper wound coverage and cleanliness, and the specific advice of the treating physician.
5. Cleaning guidance for school custodians is available in the recommended websites references.
6. Information is also available in the recommended websites references regarding the development of policies about whether to require that schools be notified of MRSA infections, and whether schools should routinely notify parents of the presence of MRSA infections in a classroom.