

March 9, 2011

Dear Child Care Professional,

We have recently received phone calls with questions about an antibiotic resistant bacteria “MRSA” (pronounced mersa) in child care facilities. In an effort to help you feel confident in talking to staff and parents, we are sending you information about staph/MRSA. Frequent use of antibiotic therapy is one reason that over time, bacteria can become resistant to some antibiotics. In this case, the Staph germ has become resistant to the family of methicillin antibiotics, hence the name methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA).

We can protect our children from antibiotic resistant bacteria by only using antibiotics when your doctor has determined that they are likely to be effective. Antibiotics will *not* cure most colds, coughs, sore throats, or runny noses as they are usually caused by viruses.

Important items to note about Staph/MRSA include:

- Symptoms:** Skin infection that includes redness, warmth, swelling, pus, boils or blisters.
- Spread:** Direct contact with drainage from skin lesions or through indirect contact with contaminated objects.
- Exclusion:** A child with any rash or draining, open sores should be excluded from child care until seen by a physician. Cuts and scrapes must be kept clean and covered.
- Prevention:** Frequent handwashing with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds. Regularly clean and disinfect toys and surfaces. No sharing of washcloths or towels. Good hygiene practices with bandage care and disposal.

Enclosed is a fact sheet with the most up-to-date information about Staph infections and MRSA.

Check that your staff and parents are aware of your illness exclusion policy for staff and children. If your child care does not have an illness exclusion policy, contact 402-441-6220 for assistance. Prevention measures are similar to other diseases, with hand washing and disinfecting being of utmost importance.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any further questions concerning MRSA or other health and safety issues in your child care.

Sincerely,

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Methicillin-resistant Staph aureus (MRSA)

What is MRSA?

MRSA is a type of staphylococcus or “Staph” that has become resistant to some antibiotics. Staph is a type of bacteria. It may cause skin infections that look like large pimples or boils. Symptoms of Staph infection include redness, warmth, swelling, pus, tenderness of the skin, abscesses or blisters. Staph infections are usually mild, superficial infections of the skin that can be treated successfully with proper skin care and antibiotics. Resistant Staph can be difficult to treat because there are fewer effective antibiotics available.

Who gets Staph infections?

Anyone can get a Staph infection. Staph are bacteria that are commonly found in the noses and on the skin of healthy people without causing infection. Occasionally, these bacteria get through the skin barrier and cause a skin or soft tissue infection.

How serious are Staph infections?

Most Staph skin infections are minor and may be easily treated. Rarely Staph may cause more serious infections or pneumonia. Sometimes, a Staph infection that starts as a skin infection may worsen. Any time an infection gets worse, it is important to contact your doctor.

How is MRSA spread?

MRSA is usually spread by direct contact with the hands, skin, drainage, or secretions from a person who is infected. It may also be spread through contaminated objects or surfaces.

How are Staph infections treated?

Treatment may include taking an antibiotic or having a doctor drain the infection. If you are given an antibiotic, be sure to take all of your antibiotic as directed. Do not share antibiotics with other people or save them to use later.

How do I keep Staph infections from spreading?

- Thorough hand washing is your best prevention.
- Keep your cuts and scrapes clean and cover them with bandages.
- Do not share personal items like towels or washcloths.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces (such as diapering areas and nap mats) that may be soiled with body fluids or secretions. A fresh solution of 1 tablespoon unscented chlorine bleach to 1 quart of water is effective.
- Share information as necessary about the child’s medical condition with those care givers providing direct care to the child, to assure the child receives appropriate care. It is not necessary to notify the entire child care community about a single case of MRSA infection.
- It is not necessary to notify parents or guardians of children about a single MRSA case in the child care. Should two or more cases of MRSA infection be identified in the child care, contact the health department (402-441-8053) and notification of parents or guardians should be considered. Confidentiality of the individual(s) should be maintained.
- Ask parents of children with draining wounds or red, swollen, and painful areas of skin to have them evaluated by a health care provider.

Exclusion Guidelines for Child Care:

A child with any rash or open sores should be excluded from child care until seen by a physician. As long as the wound can be covered and the dressing kept dry and intact, exclusion is not necessary.