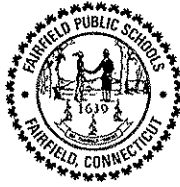


FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Superintendent of Schools



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The Education Center

October 18, 2007

Dear Parents and Staff,

Wednesday, October 17, the Weston Public Schools reported the presence of a student with MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus). MRSA is a type of staph infection that is resistant to certain antibiotics. Symptoms can include skin infections that look like a pimple or a boil and can be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. MRSA is a fairly common infection in relation to health care settings and is becoming more common among professional and amateur athletes. In a recent Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report, they estimate that in 2005 there were more than 94,000 infections and 19,000 deaths in the United States. While these numbers may seem alarming, they are roughly one-half the number of annual hospitalizations and deaths due to seasonal influenza. Nearly 85% of MRSA infections are associated with health care settings, while 15% occur in the community. This infection can be treated, but treatment is far more effective and more certain if it begins within 24 hours of contracting the infection. MRSA is transmitted most frequently by direct skin-to-skin contact.

If you have monitored recent news stories, you know that the presence of this strong staph infection has caused death and illness in other parts of the nation, most recently in Virginia. I have consulted with the Town of Fairfield Health Department, and **while we do not wish to alarm parents or children**, there are basic precautions we all should take to prevent transmission of any bacteria.

Please do the following to the best of your ability at home:

- Emphasize to children of all ages the need to wash their hands several times during the day, when they return home, before eating or drinking, after using the toilet and before bed time.
- Proper hand washing includes using soap and warm water, thoroughly scrubbing all parts of the hands for at least 20 seconds, rinsing well and drying.
- Use a disinfectant daily in bathroom and kitchen areas.
- Keep any cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a clean and dry bandage until healed.
- Be extra vigilant with athletes (even young children playing in the yard) who might get a cut or scrape in a game, at practice, or on a swing set.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, deodorants, makeup or razors.

In the Fairfield Public Schools:

- We will continue our on-going efforts to ensure that children wash their hands multiple times throughout the day.
- I have instructed our custodial crews at each school to take extra care in their daily cleaning. We will keep soap and paper towels well stocked.
- Our school nurses will be vigilant for any signs of MRSA.

- Our Athletic Directors and Coaches will be asking all of our athletes to monitor themselves closely and report any unusual signs of infection.
- Our Athletic Directors have been reminded to make sure uniforms, practice clothing, mats and other equipment are cleaned and disinfected on a regular basis.

These precautions should serve us well.

If you note any symptoms, contact your physician and the school nurse immediately.

We will update you should more information become available.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Ann Clark

Ann Clark
Superintendent of Schools

* for additional MRSA information:

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_ca_public.html