

# Talking Points for Local Health Departments

## Community-Associated MRSA October, 2007

1. Community-associated methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (CA-MRSA) is now the most common cause of skin infections in many parts of the country, including communities in West Virginia.
2. CA-MRSA is different from the hospital strain of MRSA in that:
  - a. It usually affects previously healthy individuals;
  - b. It is usually sensitive to other antibiotics.
3. *Staphylococcus aureus* or 'staph,' is a common skin bacteria. Twenty to forty percent of people carry 'staph' on their skin without becoming ill.
4. 'Staph' can be spread from one person to another by skin-to-skin contact or sharing personal items such as towels, clothing, razors, etc. Damage to the skin through cuts, abrasions, burns, use of needles or tattooing without proper antiseptic technique, etc. may result in a 'staph' infection.
5. Outbreaks of CA-MRSA have occurred in daycares, military barracks, camps, athletic teams, jails, and among families and men who have sex with men.
6. Here is some common-sense advice for people to avoid spreading 'staph' infections:
  - a. Avoid unnecessary antibiotic use.
  - b. Keep your hands clean. Shower or bathe regularly and wear clean clothes.
  - c. Do not share personal items such as towels or clothing or razors.
  - d. Cover wounds with a clean, dry dressing.
  - e. Avoid crowding or crowded situations.
7. Here are some common-sense guidelines for schools. Use 'Universal Skin Precautions':
  - a. All wounds should be covered. If the wound cannot be covered or the drainage cannot be contained, the child or staff member should be excluded from school.
  - b. All students and staff should wash hands thoroughly and regularly with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Schools should maintain plentiful supplies of hot water and paper towels. Check soap dispensers frequently to be certain they are full.
  - c. All students and staff should shower or bathe regularly and wear clean clothing.
  - d. All students and staff should avoid sharing personal items, including clothing, towels, athletic equipment, etc.
  - e. Regular daily cleaning of surfaces in restrooms, locker rooms, gymnasiums and training facilities is important. Use freshly mixed 10% bleach or an EPA-registered disinfectant effective against MRSA.
  - f. Report outbreaks immediately to your local health department.
  - g. It is not necessary to close schools during outbreaks.
8. The role of local health departments in MRSA control
  - a. Investigate reported outbreaks and help schools, businesses and others decide on appropriate measures for outbreak control.
  - b. Educate their communities on prevention and control measures.