

MRSA (Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)

MRSA is receiving much publicity lately but it has been identified for about 30 years. At any time 1 to 3% of the population is carrying MRSA. It is a bacterial skin infection that is not rare and not new.

“Staph” bacteria (*Staphylococcus aureus*) are a common cause of skin infections. Although a staph skin infection can be serious to the individual, almost all cases can be effectively treated. Staph bacteria that are resistant to certain antibiotics are called MRSA (Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*).

Local public health agencies recommend that parents, schools, and daycares use the following guidelines:

1. Recognize that *Staphylococcus aureus* are common skin bacteria that can cause infections.
2. Recognize that *Staphylococcus aureus* can also cause serious life threatening illness.
3. Recognize that in Washington State, anywhere from 21%-46% (or more) of *Staphylococcus aureus* laboratory cultures are classified as MRSA.
4. MRSA is *Staphylococcus aureus*, not a “super-bug”, as described in some media reports.
5. MRSA or staph bacteria transmission can be prevented by simple measures including:

Prevention includes:

- Frequent hand washing,
- Covering wounds with bandages,
- Avoiding contact with another’s open sores,
- Don’t share personal items such as towels, and
- Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned routinely using an EPA registered disinfectant or 1 tablespoon of bleach in one quart of water – for a 1:100 solution.

Here are 3 good links for MRSA:

CDC's page on Community Acquired MRSA:

<http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/>

Tacoma/Pierce County Living with MRSA brochure:

<http://www.tpchd.org/files/library/0da5feee74b2852b.pdf>

King County fact sheet on MRSA:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/communicable/diseases/mrsa.aspx>