



Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) Information for Childcare Providers

Staphylococcus aureus is a bacterium commonly found in the nose or on the skin of healthy people. Some strains of *Staphylococcus aureus* are resistant to several antibiotics, including methicillin. Those strains are known as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or **MRSA**. When a bacterium becomes resistant to an antibiotic, infections caused by that organism are more difficult to treat. **MRSA** skin infections are now being widely seen in otherwise healthy people.

Symptoms Symptoms of **MRSA** skin infections include redness and warmth of the infected area, with or without pus. Infection types include boils, impetigo, cellulitis and wound infections.

Spread **MRSA** is spread by contact with the hands, skin/wound drainage of an infected person. **MRSA** is also often “carried” in the nose (is present without causing infection), and can be spread by contact with nasal secretions.

Incubation Incubation is the time span from when an infectious agent (bacterium, virus, etc.) gains entry to a susceptible person/site to when the first symptoms appear. **MRSA** is a variation of a normal skin bacterium there may be a long delay between exposure to **MRSA** and onset of infection. Exposure to **MRSA** will not always cause **MRSA** infection.

Communicable Period Skin/wound drainage and respiratory secretions are infectious for as long as the infection lasts.

Exclusion Facilities need to establish their own policy regarding the exclusion of children and staff with boils; draining wounds; wound dressing regimens; prescription medication regimens. Policy must reflect that if children with draining wounds are accepted, they are not to have physical contact with other children until the wound has healed.

Treatment Parents/guardians should be directed to take the child for medical evaluation for skin lesions that do not resolve in 3-4 days.

Prevention & Control The facility should have policies for hand hygiene, disinfection (furniture and equipment), exclusion (staff and children) for illness, and other policies as recommended by The California Child Care Health Program (see resources). Briefly, public health recommends:

1. Hand hygiene

Follow facility’s hand hygiene policy. NOTE: Wash hands thoroughly with soap and running water after contact with the secretions or skin drainage of another person. Hand hygiene is the best way to prevent the spread of disease.

2. Personal Protection

- Use gloves for hand protection whenever an exposure to wound drainage, blood, or other body fluids is anticipated.
- Do not share, nor allow the children to share, towels or personal care items.
- Infection control practice dictates that fingernails be kept short (to the tip of the finger).
- Keep skin healthy by using a water-based moisturizer.

3. Disinfection

Follow facility policy regarding the disinfection of surfaces and equipment. Dedicate furniture and equipment for the use of the infected child (e.g. do not allow another child to use the same sleep mat, toys, etc.). Do not put the infected child's items back into general use until they have been disinfected.

4. Bandage/diaper changes

The infection control practice for bandage changes is essentially that for diaper changes.

- Dedicate an area for the task; this area should be far away from food handling areas.
- Cover the area with a disposable cover.
- Gather all materials needed before starting.
- Wash hands and apply gloves.
- Remove the bandage
- Place the bandage in a trash bag, then remove gloves and add them to the bag.
- Wash hands and apply new gloves
- Place the new bandage. The child can now return to his/her activities.
- Gather up the disposable cover. Place in trash bag then remove gloves and place in bag.
- Disinfect the area used.
- Close the bag and place in trash.
- Wash hands.

Resources <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/hip/aresist/ca-mrsa.htm> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, community associated MRSA page.
<http://www.hsahealth.org> The Stanislaus County Health Services Agency has an excellent general information pamphlet: "*Staph 'Skin Infections'*" that can be provided to staff and parents/ guardians.
www.ucsfchildcarehealth.org/ Publishes "Health and Safety in the Child Care Setting: Prevention of Infectious Disease." Excellent guide for daycare policy creation.
<http://nrc.uchsc.edu/CFOC> Publishes "Caring for Our Children" available as a web download (free).

For more information call Stanislaus County Public Health at 209-558-5678.