

New Jersey Department of Health & Senior Services

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

Frequently Asked Questions

Due to recent media reports of MRSA cases among school students, the NJ Dept. of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) Infectious and Zoonotic Disease Program (IZDP) is providing the following information.

Is MRSA reportable?

Single cases of MRSA are not reportable. However, if there is a cluster (2 or more non-household cases) of MRSA infections within a school, the local health department should be contacted so it can determine if an outbreak might be occurring.

Should infected students/employees be excluded from school?

Schools should not be closed, and classes should not be canceled. People who are infected are permitted to attend school/work as long as they are compliant with infection control measures. Skin infections should be kept clean and bandaged. Students who participate in contact sports may be excluded from participating if they cannot keep their wound properly bandaged. If there are multiple confirmed cases of MRSA infections among members of a particular sport, and the sport team shares common equipment, that sports team may be closed down temporarily. These recommendations should be made in consultation with the local health department.

Should we notify parents if a student has a MRSA infection?

NJDHSS does not recommend parent notification for isolated cases. However, if a particular school chooses to notify parents, please do so in coordination with your local health department. The local health department will review any letters for technical accuracy and can assist with phone inquiries from concerned parents.

What can schools do to prevent MRSA infections?

- Provide students/parents with information about MRSA and preventive behaviors.
- Encourage frequent handwashing by students and employees.
- Encourage proper personal hygiene among students and employees such as showering after sports activities, wearing clean clothing, etc.
- Discourage the sharing of personal items such as clothing, towels, bar soap, sports equipment, etc.

- Ensure proper environmental cleaning with EPA approved disinfectants.
- Encourage staff and students to keep any wounds bandaged and to consult with their healthcare provider for evaluation of any suspicious skin lesions.

Should any special soap be used for handwashing?

Any kind of soap is fine for handwashing. It does not have to be antibacterial. Frequent handwashing is very important, and the act of washing is more important than the type of soap.

Should special laundry detergent be used?

There is no need for special laundry detergent. Washing clothing in hot water with regular laundry detergent and drying in a hot air drier will kill the bacteria.

Should special disinfectants be used?

There is no need for special disinfectants. Use an EPA-approved product, and follow use instructions carefully.

Does the NJDHSS have any educational materials?

The NJDHSS has a brochure entitled "MRSA: Preventing Skin Infections in School and Athletic Settings." It is available for download and printing from the NJDHSS website (listed below). Limited quantities of the brochure are available upon request. Call the NJDHSS IZDP at 609-588-7500 to place an order.

Information regarding MRSA including educational materials and guidelines for school, correctional, and health care settings can be found at the NJDHSS website at <http://nj.gov/health/cd/mrsa/index.shtml>.