



South Hunterdon Regional High School

301 Mt. Airy – Harbourton Road
Lambertville, New Jersey 08530



Nancy H. Gartenberg, *Superintendent*
Frances Tolley, *Interim Business Administrator/Board Secretary*
Donald D. Woodring, *Principal*
Michael P. Godown, *Assistant Principal*

School Office
609-397-2060
Fax 609-397-2366

Board of
Education
609-397-1888
Fax 609-397-6495

October 24, 2007

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Due to recent media reports of MRSA cases among school students, the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services has provided the following basic guidance and answers related to MRSA management in schools:

What is MRSA?

MRSA refers to a type of bacteria (*Staphylococcus aureus*) that is resistant to many antibiotics. It is most commonly acquired in hospitals. More recently, MRSA has been reported in increasing numbers among healthy persons of all ages in the community. It is estimated that *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria are carried by 30-50% of the population, and is easily passed from one person to another. This doesn't necessarily cause an infection unless there is a break in the skin, like from an insect bite or scratch.

How Can We Prevent MRSA Infections?

As with most things, prevention is important to avoid these infections. "Staph" and MRSA are spread from having close contact with infected people and there are precautions that can help you avoid these infections. In addition to direct physical contact, MRSA may also be spread by indirect contact by touching objects (towels, sheets, wound dressings, clothes, workout areas, and sports equipment) contaminated by the infected skin of a person with MRSA or staph bacteria.

To avoid staph and MRSA, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that everyone practice **good hygiene** as follows:

- **Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water.**
- **Shower or bath thoroughly after athletic workouts and contact with other players.**
- **Utilize alcohol-based hand sanitizers when soap and water are unavailable.**
- **Laundry athletic uniforms and other athletic clothing in hot water and dry them in a hot dryer.**
- **If you have an open wound, be sure to clean it well, and keep it covered with a bandage that attaches to the skin on all sides.**
- **Never share or borrow towels, razors, soap, or any others personal items.**

South Hunterdon's Proactive Approach

- **Our school nurse is working with the Hunterdon County Health Department and has been apprised of the signs and symptoms of the infection.**
- **“High-risk” areas have been targeted, and appropriate cleaning techniques are in place to kill bacteria, fungi, and viruses – including MRSA.**
- **Coaches are instructed to refer any students with signs of skin infection to the school nurse.**
- **Education is the key, as well as hand washing and good hygiene. Basic principles of “No Sharing” personal objects will greatly reduce the spread of this and any infection.**
- **The school nurse is the key person in the school. All concerns should be directed to her.**

You can visit the following websites for more information.

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

www.state.nj.us/health/cd/mrsa/documents/mrsa_factsheet.pdf

Please call your family physician if you have any additional questions about MRSA. We must all work together to promote health and wellness in our schools. See a physician immediately upon observing any new skin lesions; if your physician suspects MRSA, please notify the school nurse as soon as possible so that we can continue to be proactive in preventing the spread of infection.

Sincerely,

Nancy H. Gartenberg
Superintendent