

Oneida County Health Department

Public Health Update

December 2015/January 2016

Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)

What is MRSA?: MRSA refers to a bacteria (Staphylococcus Aureus) that is resistant to many antibiotics.

Who is affected by MRSA?: Anyone can get MRSA. Most cases are found in hospitalized patients, but athletes may become infected or become exposed to this as well.

What are the symptoms of MRSA infection?: Depending on the area of the body that is affected, infection may result in redness, swelling, and tenderness of the infection site. MRSA infections often first look like spider bites or bumps that are red, swollen, and painful. These skin infections commonly occur at sites of visible skin trauma, such as cuts and abrasions, and areas of the body covered by hair (e.g., back of neck, groin, buttock, armpit, beard area of men). People may carry MRSA without having any symptoms.

How is MRSA spread?: MRSA is spread through direct contact with the hands of someone who is infected with MRSA or carrying the bacteria.

How long can an infected person carry MRSA?: Some people carry MRSA for days to months even after being treated.

How are MRSA infections diagnosed?: MRSA infections are diagnosed when the doctor sends a sample from the infection site to a laboratory. The lab will test to see if the bacteria is resistant.

How are MRSA infections treated?: MRSA infections can usually be treated with an antibiotic known as vancomycin. Alternative antibiotics are being developed to treat infections that are resistant to vancomycin.

Wound Care

- Cuts or other abrasions on the skin should be washed with soap and water.
- Cover all wounds. A clean dressing should be applied every day until healed.
- All open wounds need to be cared for with the use of gloves to avoid exposure.
- Soiled dressings should be handled with gloves and adequately disposed of after handling.
- Wash hands frequently after exposure to contaminated persons and equipment.

Prevention Strategies

- Coaches and trainers should always use gloves when attending to the wounds of athletes.
- Refer wounds to appropriate healthcare personnel and assure little to no contact to other players.
- Launder personal items (i.e., towels) and clean sports equipment frequently, ideally after each use.
- At the beginning of every season, teach players how to recognize wounds.
- If an infection is identified, take proper precautions in avoiding the spreading of the infection.
- Report any clusters of skin infection to your local health department

