

November 13, 2007

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Recently, the news media have reported several cases of staph infection, possibly Methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) around the country. Staphylococcus aureus, or staph, is a common germ that many people carry in their nasal passages or on their skin with no ill effects. MRSA is a type of staph that has developed a resistance to certain antibiotics. Staph is spread primarily by direct (skin-to-skin) human contact with the infected drainage of someone who is carrying or infected with the bacteria. Anyone with a break in his or her skin is at risk. MRSA may also occur less frequently through indirect contact with contaminated surfaces or items.

Staph infections begin abruptly. Symptoms may include a large area of redness on the skin, swelling and pain, followed by a pustule, abscess, boil or carbuncle (red, lumpy sores filled with pus). Many people initially believe a spider has bitten them. If left untreated, staph can cause severe illness that requires hospitalization.

Students and their family members should take the following precautions to help prevent skin infections:

- Encourage frequent hand washing with soap and warm water.
- Encourage students to keep their fingernails clean and clipped short.
- Avoid contact with other people's infections or anything contaminated by an infection.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as razors, towels, deodorant, make-up, or soap that directly touches the body.
- Clean and disinfect objects (such as gym and sports equipment).
- Wash dirty clothes, linens, and towels with hot water and laundry detergent. Using a hot dryer, rather than air-drying also helps kill bacteria.
- Encourage students who participate in contact sports to shower immediately after each practice, game or match.
- Keep open or draining sores and lesions clean and covered. Anyone assisting with infection care should wear gloves and wash their hands with soap and water **Before** and **After** bandage changes.

We encourage you to be vigilant in looking for signs and symptoms of staph infection. If you or any family members exhibit symptoms described above, you are encouraged to contact your family doctor immediately. Additional information about staph and MRSA can be found at [www.mrsaTexas.org](http://www.mrsaTexas.org) or by contacting the nurse at your child's school.

Nederland ISD Health Services