

## **MRSA**

### **Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus***

#### **What is *Staphylococcus aureus* (staph)?**

*Staphylococcus aureus* (staf-lo-coc-cuc-aw-ree-us) is a bacterium that is commonly carried in the nose and on the skin of healthy people. The bacterium is often referred to as “staph”. It is estimated that 30 percent of the population carries staph on the skin or in the nose. Methicillin or penicillin and cephalosporins are generally used to treat staph infections.

About 1% of persons have a type of staph resistant to these antibiotics called methicillin-resistant *staph aureus*, which is often referred to as MRSA. Other antibiotics must be used to treat MRSA infections. The drug Vancomycin has proven to be the most effective and reliable in these cases, but it is used intravenously and is not effective against MRSA when taken by mouth.

Over the past 20 years, MRSA infections have occurred among patients in hospitals or long-term care facilities. However, MRSA infections are becoming more common in otherwise healthy persons who have not had contact with health care personnel or patients. These infections are known as “community-associated MRSA” or CA-MRSA infections.

#### **What does a staph infection look like?**



Most infections caused by staph are skin infections, such as pimples or boils. Staph skin infections can be red, painful, swollen, or have pus or other drainage. More serious staph infections can also cause pneumonia and infections of the blood and joints.

#### **How is staph spread?**

Staph can be easily spread by contaminated hands that have not been properly washed. It also can be transmitted by contact with secretions from infected skin lesions, wounds and nasal discharge, and objects and surfaces

contaminated with staph. MRSA is not spread easier, but it is more difficult to treat. Close skin-to-skin contact; openings in the skin, such as abrasions or cuts; contaminated items or surfaces; and crowded living conditions are some factors linked

#### **What to do to prevent staph infections**

Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand gel.

Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.

Avoid contact with other people’s wounds or bandages.

Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.

GWCS attending physician, Dr Bob Selig, is consulted along with The Pennsylvania Department of Health are consulted if multiple cases should occur at our school.

*Adapted from MRSA information published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*