

Sports Shorts

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

Staph and skin infections

Infections of the skin and soft tissues, such as abscesses (boils) are most commonly caused by bacteria known as *Staphylococcus aureus*. In recent years many of these strains of bacteria have become resistant to the common antibiotics we used in the past. This is a serious development. Both the methicillin-susceptible (MSSA) and the methicillin-resistant (MRSA) forms of *Staphylococcus* are highly contagious; can spread readily among family members and school-mates; and under certain circumstances, can be a very dangerous, and even fatal, form of infection. Everyone associated with the active child, particularly those participating in sports where skin-to-skin contact is common (wrestling, football, basketball, lacrosse, etc.), need to be watchful about skin infections, and take the right steps to limit them right away.

Tips for preventing spread of MRSA/MSSA

1. Wash hands frequently throughout the day.
2. Always wash hands after touching infected skin or touching an item that was in direct contact with a draining wound.
 - Soap and water (the brand of soap is not important) or
 - Alcohol-based gels
3. Do not share clothes/towels/linens or personal items such as razors.
4. If possible, avoid shaving in skin areas that are frequently infected.
5. If shaving those areas cannot be avoided, change razor blades frequently.
6. When washing laundry, add bleach (if color permits) and use hot water.
7. Dry clothes on the hottest possible setting (bleach and heat can kill MRSA/MSSA).
8. Keep hands washed and fingernails clean and cut short to prevent scratches to the skin.
9. Cover any draining infected area with a clean, dry bandage.
10. Environmental surfaces that have frequent contact with bare skin (door knobs, countertops, bath tubs, and toilet seats) should be cleaned frequently with any commercially available cleaner or detergent.

The following recommendations from the physicians of the Ohio Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics can help you to decrease the chances of an infection getting worse, or an isolated infection becoming a recurring problem due to the spread of the MRSA and MSSA type infections.

If your child is involved in sports, discourage any sharing of personal or sports equipment with other kids. Be sure all equipment is kept clean and clothing and towels are washed frequently. Keep a close eye on your child's skin, looking for skin wounds or infections that may signal early problems and treat them right away.

If your child has multiple recurrences, try using a soap with chlorhexidine (Hibiclens) to bathe, three times per week for four weeks. This, plus the above recommendations, may help limit reinfection.

Also:

- Apply Bactroban ointment just inside the nose using a Q-tip twice a day for five days.
- Use bleach baths two times a week for about 1-3 months with 1 teaspoon of bleach per gallon of water (or a cup of bleach in a tub of water = 13 gallons). Soak in the bleach water up to your neck for 10-15 minutes, then rinse thoroughly with plain water afterwards.
- Recurrent pus-filled skin infections after trying these routine measures merits a visit to your doctor. Antibiotics may be needed to control the infections.

Finally, if your child is involved in school sports and has had a problem with skin infections, remind the coaches and athletic trainers to be vigilant about keeping those students with open lesions out of direct contact with others until the wounds heal completely. Controlling MRSA is an issue for the whole community.

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This information is available on the Ohio AAP website www.ohioaap.org