



County of Yolo

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Four Easy Ways to Stop the Spread of MRSA

Woodland, CA—Staph, the moniker for staphylococcus aureus, is one of the most common skin infections in the United States. Staph is an organism that is normally carried by about 30% of the population, and can sometimes cause an infection. These infections are usually very minor.

One of the more recognized and talked about staph organisms is Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA. It is resistant to some antibiotics. MRSA is normally carried by about one percent of the population, and can also sometimes cause an infection.

The symptoms of a staph skin infection, including MRSA, may appear as pimples or boils which are often red, swollen, painful, and may have pus or other drainage. They commonly occur on the skin where cuts or abrasions have occurred or on areas of the body covered by hair.

Staph and MRSA are usually transmitted from person to person by direct skin-to-skin contact or contact with shared items or surfaces that have come in contact with someone else's infection.

“In healthy people, staph infections rarely become serious,” states Dr. Bette Hinton, Yolo County Health Officer. “Good hygiene practices top the list for preventing a staph infection.”

There are four ways to help stop the spread of staph and MRSA infections:

- Practice good hygiene, i.e. keeping your hands clean by washing with soap and water, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover abrasions or cuts with a clean dry bandage until they are healed.
- Avoid sharing personal items that come into contact with your skin like towels, razors, etc.
- Keep surfaces clean that come in contact with people's skin.

Staph infections are usually treated by draining the pus, and sometimes with antibiotics. If antibiotics are prescribed, be sure to take all the medicine.

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Staph infections can occur anywhere. Some settings have factors that make it easier to spread the infection. Common areas include schools, dormitories, military barracks, households, correctional facilities and daycare settings.

If your child acquires a staph infection, check with their school or daycare about their policy for skin infections.

“More people die every year from seasonal flu, than from a staph infection,” adds Hinton. “Good hygiene is the cornerstone for stopping the spread of most infections.”

For more information about staph and MRSA infections, go to www.cdc.gov, or the Yolo County Health department web site at www.yolohealth.org and select Health Alerts.