

Gateway Regional High School District

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Joyce D. Stumpo
Superintendent of Schools

August 30, 2006

Dear Parents/Guardian:

Recently there has been a great deal of media attention concerning methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA). After consulting with Mrs. Fieger, School Nurse, this letter was drafted as an informational tool for the families of our students.

Several decades ago a strain of staphylococcus (a bacteria capable of causing infection) was discovered to be resistant to antibiotics previously capable of destroying "staph". At that time, MRSA infections were primarily seen in hospitals and nursing homes, but in recent years a community associated MRSA has become more common in the general population. MRSA can cause skin infections that, if not treated, have the potential to become serious. Fortunately, newer antibiotics can be used to treat MRSA.

MRSA can be spread by direct physical contact with an infected person or by objects contaminated with MRSA (towels, uniforms, etc.). People in close contact with each other, such as athletes, are at an increased risk of coming in contact with MRSA and other disease causing organisms. Prevention is the key to stopping MRSA and other sources of infection from becoming prevalent within our school populations. Several simple tips can help meet this goal:

1. Frequent hand washing with soap and water is the single most important thing we can do to prevent the spread of ANY infection.
2. Clean and cover any cut or wound until healed to decrease the chance of bacteria infecting the area.
3. Clean shared-surface areas with alcohol or 10% bleach solution to help eradicate disease-causing organisms.
4. Practice good hygiene.
5. Launder clothing, uniforms, towels, etc. in hot water and use the dryer.

Gateway will continue to enforce its policy to refer any student *known* to have a skin infection or unexplained rash to a health care provider for diagnosis and treatment. We will also need the assistance of members of our Gateway community to help us prevent the spread of community associated MRSA. Please have any family members with skin infections evaluated by your health care provider. As always, please notify the school nurse if your child is diagnosed with a contagious disease.

An informational pamphlet provided by the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services will be available on our Gateway website for those who would like more information.

Sincerely,

Joyce D. Stumpo
Superintendent of Schools

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cc: Mrs. Susan Fieger, School Nurse
Dr. Ronald Davis, Principal
Mr. Louis Raba, Director of Athletics
Ms. Gina Rolfe, Athletic Trainer