

October 19, 2007

Dear BISD Parents,

Hardly a week goes by that we don't hear or read in the newspaper about skin infections on the rise. Infections that once were seen only in a hospital setting are becoming more common in other situations such as daycare centers, pro-athletics, schools, and nursing homes. In particular, the infection caused by the staphylococcus aureus (staph) bacteria is the one getting most of the attention. Staph is not just associated with places students gather, but may be "picked up" from an array of places and contacts in the community.

Staph generally resides in the nostrils of many individuals and causes little harm unless it is transferred by the hands to another part of the body or to someone else. Most people who develop the skin infection from staph do so from self-inoculation (the transferring of a germ from one body area to another.)

There are multitudes of reasons for the emergence of harmful bacteria, and many have concerned the medical community for years. Some reasons for the increase in infections are: inappropriately prescribing antibiotics when the illness is actually a viral infection, the individual not taking all of the prescribed medication, sharing medication with others who have similar symptoms, or saving the medication in case the symptoms return, etc. These practices have created extremely resistant germs to the regular arsenal of antibiotics used to fight infections. Now, more potent and expensive antibiotics taken for longer periods of time are needed to combat some invading organisms.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar\\_mrsa.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa.html) and the Texas Department of Health TDH) [www.tdh.state.tx.us/ideas/antibiotic\\_resistance/mrsa](http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/ideas/antibiotic_resistance/mrsa) maintains web sites that are helpful for medical professionals as well as the lay person. These sites discuss the transmission of skin diseases, the importance of hand washing, and general care of wounds.

Many young people throughout the country have had troublesome staph infections including Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA). MRSA are strains of staph bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics frequently used to treat staph infections. MRSA infections can be difficult to treat and can progress to life-threatening blood or bone infections. Since the safety and welfare of our students is important, helpful information to our parents can assist our district in preventing or curtailing the spread of infections. Encouraging good hygiene and regular and frequent hand washing practices are recommended. Athletes should not share towels, jerseys, pads and other personal care items (bars of soap, razors, or deodorants). Any athletes with a MRSA infection should be restricted from participation until they have been treated by a physician and are free from any draining wounds. Sometimes the MRSA infection may appear to look just like a spider bite and may require a culture to be done to confirm an MRSA infection. Other measures include obtaining regular immunizations, seeking medical attention for wounds or insect bites that do not heal quickly and proper care of every day scrapes and scratches. This

will help prevent entry of bacteria into the body and reduce the spread of germs to someone else. These are important means to curtail infections. Please contact your school nurse or your physician for further information.