

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA



CHESTERFIELD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

P. O. Box 100
Chesterfield, Virginia 23832



October 18, 2007

Dear Parent:

In light of recent events in Virginia and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report on invasive Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcal Aureus (MRSA) infections, we are sending you this letter to provide important information. We also want you to know steps are being taken locally to control this important public health issue. Most cases of noninvasive and invasive *Staphylococcus* ('staph') are still caused by organisms that are *sensitive* to most antibiotics. Those that are resistant are called "methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*." The vast majority of these MRSA infections are *not* invasive; rather they involve only the skin and are more easily treated.

The Chesterfield Health District and Chesterfield County Public Schools (CCPS) are working closely to ensure that all necessary steps are in place to prevent the spread of infection.

Although today there are no current staph outbreaks in CCPS facilities, we are doing the following:

- Enhancing MRSA awareness among faculty, staff and students
- Continuing to promote good hygiene and hygienic practices throughout the school system
- Having school health workers work with students and parents to ensure early detection and prompt medical evaluation of any suspicious skin sores.
- Reviewing daily cleaning procedures to be sure they are being implemented as expected.

Please be advised that federal, state and local recommendations for control of MRSA do *not* include the cancellation of practices or games because transmission of MRSA takes place when sharing contaminated material and objects, not skin contact during games and ordinary school activities.

You can help by practicing these guidelines and encouraging your student(s) to do the same:

- **Wash your hands often**, especially when you are exposed to someone with an infection or when you touch objects that may be contaminated.
- **Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered.**
- **Avoid sharing personal items** such as towels, sports equipment, razors, etc.
- **If a sore or cut becomes red, oozes, causes pain or is not healing, see a doctor promptly.**
- **Shower** after physical activity or sports.
- **Routinely clean surfaces, sports equipment and gear as recommended.** Because the bacteria live on the skin, they may be reintroduced into any environment at any time. Therefore, hand washing and wound care remain the primary means of preventing staph infections. MRSA is not spread through the air.
- **If your child has or had a MRSA infection**, talk to your doctor about what precautions are necessary to prevent spread at home or at school. Let the school nurse and/or the coach of your sporting team know of the infection so appropriate hygienic measures can be taken.

Our Virginia Department of Health website, <http://www.vdh.state.va.us/> will direct you to additional MRSA information. If you have additional MRSA-related questions, please call the Chesterfield Health Department's School Health Services at 748-1633.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William R. Nelson MD".

William R. Nelson, M.D., M.P.H.
Director