

October, 2007

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Many of you have probably heard or read of the recent outbreak of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA). There are no cases of MRSA in the Basehor-Linwood district at this time, however, we would like our parents to be kept informed of issues that may cause concern.

Staph is commonly found on the skin or in the nose of healthy, as well as ill persons. At any time 25 percent to 30 percent of the population is carrying the staph bacteria, while about 1 percent of the population is carrying MRSA.

Most people carry "staph" on their skin without symptoms or infection, but if it gets into cuts or abrasions of the skin, it may cause skin infections. These infections usually appear as pimples, boils, or abscesses and may be mistaken for "spider bites." Children who become symptomatic should be seen by a health care provider for evaluation.

Children with MRSA infection may require exclusion from the school setting when draining lesions are not able to be adequately covered with a dry dressing, however if lesions can be covered by a dry dressing or clothing children need not be excluded from school.

MRSA is most frequently spread by direct skin-to-skin contact or with direct contact to wound drainage of someone who is carrying or infected with the bacteria.

First line of prevention includes good hygiene, proper hand washing with soap and water, keeping all sports equipment clean and not sharing personal items. If your child develops a sore or infection, which seems to get worse rather than heal, contact your physician for evaluation and inform the school nurse.

USD 458 schools are taking the following precautions. Weight room equipment is wiped down after each use. Wrestling mats are sterilized each day after use. Sanitary "bombs" are set off in lockerrooms and hallways once a week whenever time allows for the air to clear before students or staff reenter the area. A cleaner manufactured to deal with staph bacteria is used to wipe down door knobs, faucets, and other surfaces touched regularly by students.