



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Practicing good hygiene can help prevent MRSA infections

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health advises that steps can be taken to help prevent infections from Community Acquired Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, known as CA-MRSA. Although the department does not have statewide data about the occurrence of MRSA infections it is aware that this is a common and growing problem.

Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to simply as “staph,” is a bacteria commonly found on the skin and in the noses of healthy people. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *S. aureus* colonizes the nostrils of approximately 30 percent of the population without causing disease.

Occasionally, staph can enter the body and cause an infection. This infection can be minor, such as boils, or serious, such as blood infections and pneumonia. Some bacteria have become resistant to the medications that were previously used to treat Staph. These resistant bacteria are called methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA.

Dr. Charles Woernle, assistant state health officer for disease control and prevention, said, “MRSA infections are probably increasing. The germ occurs frequently and occasionally can cause severe and life-threatening infections. This is because the organism has acquired resistance to common antibiotics, and so it can be very difficult to treat and cure.”

Practicing good hygiene and infection control practices can lower the risk of MRSA infections. These include:

1. Hand washing is the number one way to prevent the spread of germs. Practicing good hand washing for at least 15 seconds with either soap and water or use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not readily available.
2. Do not share personal items such as towels, washcloths, razors, athletic uniforms, or other clothing which may have had contact with a wound or bandage. Wash soiled clothes or linens with hot water and laundry detergent and dry in a hot dryer.
3. Avoid contact with the wounds or bandages of other people. If contact is necessary, wear disposable gloves and wash hands immediately after removal of the gloves. The used gloves and dressings can be disposed of with other household trash.
4. Keep all cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a dressing or bandage until healed. Follow your healthcare provider’s instructions on proper care of the wound.

5. Students should avoid sharing personal items and skin care products such as clothing and balms or moisturizers.
6. Seek medical attention if a wound does not heal properly or appears to be infected.
7. If prescribed an antibiotic, take all of the doses, even if the infection appears to be getting better. Do not share antibiotics with others or save unfinished antibiotics to use at another time.
8. Clean surfaces with a commercial disinfectant or a fresh solution of bleach in water.

The department has provided information to institutions and the public about steps to take to reduce the transmission of these organisms.

More information about MRSA is available at www.adph.org/epi. This includes guidelines to prevent the spread of MRSA in hospitals and long-term care facilities, schools and sports settings.