

## Staff Infection

One of the latest health concerns you are hearing about in the news is MRSA, which is methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aurea*. This bacteria causes skin infections that are resistant to many antibiotics. This infection is treatable, but if left untreated it could result in serious health consequences, infecting the blood and bones.

At one time these infections were primarily contracted in hospitals or nursing homes. However, today that is simply not the case. Large numbers of infected people are being reported from schools, sporting teams, and gyms.

According to Janet M. Pollard, MPH and Carol A. Rice, Ph.D., R.N. you will likely contract the staph bacteria through skin-to-skin contact with an infected person or coming in contact with items that have the bacteria on them. You are more susceptible to the infection if you have dry skin or openings such as cuts or scrapes on your skin.

Some of the symptoms to watch for are sores that resemble spider bites, painful, red bumps or blisters on the skin, and cuts that are swollen and filled with pus. It is important to seek medical attention if you have any of these symptoms. The infection will only worsen if you do not begin a course of prescribed medication from a medical professional.

The best course of action to avoid contracting a staph infection is through prevention. The most important step is to practice proper hand washing, which consists of using warm water and soap. Other modes of prevention include bathing as soon as possible after direct contact sports or activities, and using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if hand washing facilities are not available. It is also important to keep fingernails trimmed short and avoid artificial fingernails. Do not share towels or other personal care items with others, most especially in the locker room or share towels on the sidelines of a game.

Keep your skin moisturized to avoid cracked skin, which is an easy entry point for the bacteria.

The key to avoiding MRSA is to be proactive and recognize the early signs of the infection. For more detailed information on this topic, visit Texas Cooperative Extension's Family & Consumer Sciences website: <http://fcs.tamu.edu>.