Southeast Health District

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"Keeping Communities Safe and Healthy"

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR RELEASE:
Immediate

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MRSA staph infections on the rise

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus*, better known as MRSA, (pronounced "mersa") is a bacteria that is resistant to certain antibiotics. The medical community has seen an increase in the number of infections caused by these bacteria over the past few years. Because the infections may be serious, the Southeast Health District and your local health department want parents and children to understand what the bacteria can cause and how to take necessary precautions to prevent getting it.

Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to simply as "staph," are bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Sometimes, staph can cause an infection by entering the skin through cuts or abrasions. Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections in the United States. Most are minor, such as pimples and boils that may be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. A healthcare provider can treat many staph skin infections by simply draining the abscess or boil, and the infected individual may not require antibiotics. However, some types of staph bacteria, such as MRSA, can cause serious infections, such as cellulitis, surgical wound infections, bloodstream infections and pneumonia that would require antibiotics and/or hospitalization.

MRSA is transmitted by direct skin-to-skin contact or contact with shared items or surfaces that have come into contact with someone else's infection (e.g., towels, used bandages). You can help prevent staph infections by:

1. Keeping your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
2. Keeping wounds clean and covered with a bandage until healed;
3. Avoiding contact with other people's wounds or bandages; and
4. Not sharing personal items such as towels or razors.

For more information about staph infections, call your doctor or your local health department.

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