



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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Governor

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Health Alert

October 20, 2005

TO: Emergency Department Physicians
 Infection Control Practitioners
 Jail and Prison Authorities
 School Authorities
 Local Health Departments
 Regional Epidemiologists

FROM: Infectious Disease Epidemiology Program
 West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources

RE: **Updates - Community Acquired Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (CA-MRSA) in West Virginia**

Community Acquired Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (CA-MRSA) continues to be reported from a variety of sources in West Virginia: 1) correctional institutions, 2) school athletic teams, 3) some emergency rooms report more than half of their *Staphylococcus aureus* isolates from skin and wound infections are MRSA.

The Infectious Disease Epidemiology Program is following this situation and encourages reporting of outbreaks to the local health department, as required by law.

Recommendations for Physicians:

- Maintain a low threshold for culturing infected skin lesions.
- Maintain a low threshold for obtaining blood cultures on potentially bacteremic patients with skin infections.
- Local care (incision and drainage, debridement) is the mainstay of treatment for localized skin lesions.

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- Empiric antibiotic therapy, if needed, should be initiated in accordance with locally available antibiogram data and adjusted according to antibiotic susceptibilities when available.
- Physicians should familiarize themselves with the principles of judicious use of antibiotics. Information is available on our website at: <http://www.wvdhhr.org/idep/a-z/a-z-antibiotic-resistance.asp>. Overuse of oral antibiotics for viral upper respiratory infections is extremely common and may contribute to increased incidence of resistant infections such as CA-MRSA. Educational materials for your patients on the problem of antibiotic overuse are available by calling 800-423-1271.
- Washington State Department of Health's "Interim Guidelines for Evaluation & Management of Community Associated Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus Skin and Soft Tissue Infections in Outpatient Setting" is available at http://www.doh.wa.gov/topics/Antibiotics/providers_MRSA_guidelines.htm. This is a useful resource.

Recommendations for Laboratories and Infection Control Practitioners

- Know the antibiotic susceptibility patterns for skin and wound infections from your emergency departments and outpatient settings.
- Inform physicians about antibiotic susceptibility of staphylococcus aureus from outpatient settings affiliated with your institution.

Recommendations for Correctional Institutions

- Detailed guidelines on "Management of Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) Infections, August 2005" are available at <http://www.bop.gov/news/PDFs/mrsa.pdf>.
- Correctional facilities should do surveillance for MRSA by maintaining a line listing of cases.
- In the event of an outbreak (i.e. when the number of cases is higher than the usual baseline incidence) then the facility should alert the local health department and conduct a joint investigation.

Recommendations for School Athletic Teams (CDC):

- Cover all wounds. If a wound cannot be covered adequately, consider excluding players with potentially infectious skin lesions from practice or competitions until the lesions are healed or can be covered adequately.
- Encourage good hygiene, including showering and washing with soap after all practices and competitions.
- Ensure availability of adequate soap and hot water.

- Discourage sharing of towels and personal items (e.g., clothing or equipment).
- Establish routine cleaning schedules for shared equipment.
- Train athletes and coaches in first aid for wounds and recognition of wounds that are potentially infected.
- Encourage athletes to report skin lesions to coaches and encourage coaches to assess athletes regularly for skin lesions.
- Measures for Preventing Staphylococcal Skin Infections Among Sports Participants and Ways to Prevent Skin Infections: A Player's Guide information are available at <http://www.wvdhhr.org/idep/pdfs/idep/TeamBrochure2ndTry.pdf> and http://www.wvdhhr.org/idep/pdfs/idep/TeamBrochure_Students3.pdf

Recommendations for Local Health Departments:

- Work with schools, jails and health care providers to raise awareness of CA-MRSA – a serious emerging public health concern in our state. Share this alert and other information with anyone who needs to know.
- Work with schools, providers and community groups to increase awareness of the problem of antibiotic overuse. Please contact Mary A Myers at 800-423-1271 for information on the GET SMART campaign, the school program and other education and outreach programs available for use in your community, or see the information on our website at <http://www.wvdhhr.org/idep/a-z/a-z-antibiotic-resistance.asp>. Encourage your regional epidemiologist to get involved.
- Report outbreaks of CA-MRSA to the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Program using West Virginia Electronic Disease Surveillance System (WVEDSS).