

Dear parents,

Recently MRSA or *Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus* has been in the news. Several schools in Monmouth and Ocean County have reported isolated cases involving students. **There have been no reported cases of MRSA at Southern Regional at this time.**

Below is some general information regarding MRSA and some precautions that may be taken.

### **What is MRSA?**

MRSA is an infection caused by a strain of bacteria commonly called “staph”. Staph bacteria are among the most common causes of skin infections. **Most “staph” infections are not the MRSA type.**

### **What does a Staph or MRSA infection look like?**

Staph bacteria (including the MRSA type) can cause skin infections that look like a boil or pimple and may be red, painful and have a discharge.

### **Where is MRSA found?**

MRSA most commonly occurs in hospitals and other health care settings such as nursing homes. MRSA occurs most frequently in people with weakened immune systems.

### **How is MRSA spread?**

MRSA is most commonly spread via direct contact, usually involving the hands that become contaminated by the bacteria.

### **Can MRSA be treated?**

Yes, with certain antibiotics or other medical procedures.

### **What precautions may be taken?**

Frequent hand washing with soap and water or the use of an alcohol based hand sanitizer. Do not share clothes, towels or other linens. Keep scratches and cuts covered until healed. Avoid contact with other people’s wounds.

### **What precautions are being taken at Southern Regional?**

For the past 15 months the custodial staff has been using an EPA registered sanitizing/cleaning product that disinfects and kills 99.9% of bacteria (including MRSA) and many viral pathogens including; hepatitis B, influenza, and HIV. Common areas and classrooms are cleaned nightly. This product is nontoxic to humans and is considered a “green” or environmentally safe cleaner/disinfectant.

In addition, locker rooms and other athletic areas have been periodically treated with another product that kills common bacteria and viruses. This agent penetrates the lockers and helps disinfect clothing and equipment in those areas.

In spite of these precautions we do not live or work in a sterile environment. Schools and all other public facilities are constantly exposed to bacteria and viruses brought in by the people who attend. In fact, cases of MRSA infection are most prevalent in hospitals where standards of cleanliness are extremely stringent.

Therefore, it is important that everyone practice good hygiene including frequent hand washing and keeping all cuts and scrapes covered and not sharing clothes or other personal items.

**What if I think I may have a staph or MRSA infection?**

Contact your health care provider for an evaluation.

**It is important that you contact your health care provider for any medical questions regarding staph infections or MRSA.**

**Please check the following websites for more information on MRSA.**

Centers for Disease Control and Infection

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/pdf/ar/MRSAPatientInfoSheet.pdf>

Ocean County Health Department

<http://www.ochd.org/MRSAIndex.htm>