

October 16, 2007

Laurel Highlands School Community:

On Monday afternoon the high school nurse verified that two students at the school had tested positive for Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA). Prior to the school becoming aware, these two students were treated and have since tested negative for MRSA. It was originally thought that these students were athletes, however they are not participants in the school's athletic program.

It is not possible to identify the source of infection to these individuals. It may or may not have occurred within the school. MRSA is a bacteria that causes a staph infection. Staph bacteria are spread by contact with the hands, wound drainage, or nasal secretions of an infected person. Spreading of MRSA by inanimate environmental objects (desks, doorknobs, etc..) is not clear but is less important than direct person-to-person spread.

Each building principal is taking extra precautions with regard to cleaning and killing the bacteria that causes staph infections. The custodians are following guidelines for cleaning as recommended by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. To help aid in protection, universal precautions should always be followed in any situation. Hand washing is the most effective method of preventing the spread of staph. Persons should wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after having contact with secretions from the nose or skin drainage from an open wound. In addition, personal items such as towels, washcloths, and clothing should not be shared.

Please talk openly about this with your children. Your doctor should see any skin infection that does not heal. For additional information, please review the enclosed informational handout, contact your doctor, or visit the Pennsylvania Department of Health's web site at www.dsf.health.state.pa.us.

We have been in contact with the Uniontown Hospital and local health care providers. As a community, we are attempting to keep the public informed as well as helping us all to understand what we need to know about MRSA.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Ronald M. Sheba, Ph.D.

Superintendent

RMS:kjp