

Dear FACS Parents & Guardians,

We would like to review some important information with you so that we may all work together to keep our school, students, and homes healthier this school year.

Immunizations & Influenza Vaccinations:

Every student must have an up-to-date *Tennessee Department of Health Certificate of Immunization* on file at school, signed by your student's physician verifying that their immunizations are complete for their grade level in school. This Certificate must be presented to the School Office **before** the first day of school. Students without a valid Certificate of Immunization will not be allowed to attend class.

To prepare for influenza season, please consult your pediatrician and consider having your student (and yourself) immunized. Children six (6) months of age and older may take the influenza vaccine. Also, the intranasal vaccine, FluMist, is approved for use in healthy people two (2) years through 49 years of age who are not pregnant.

Fever:

If your student has a fever (101 degrees), please keep them at home until they have been fever-free without medication (such as Tylenol) for at least 24 hours.

Wash Your Hands: **

Careful hand washing is your best defense against germs. Scrub hands briskly for at least 20 seconds, then dry them with a disposable towel and use another towel to turn off the faucet. Carry a small bottle of hand sanitizer containing at least 60 percent alcohol, for times when you don't have access to soap and water. Have your children wash their hands when they arrive home from school each day. The School Nurse will be talking with the elementary students about Mr. Germ and hand washing.

Other Signs & Symptoms:

A student with any of the following symptoms should stay home from school until such time as he/she is free of symptoms, has been satisfactorily treated or submits a signed physician's statement that he/she is not contagious. Stay home from school if he/she has:

- Undetermined rash over any part of the body accompanied by fever.
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea (student must be symptom free for 24 hours without medication, before re-entry).
- Red, draining eyes.
- Open, draining lesions.

Communication is key between parents/guardians and the school to keep our students and staff as healthy as possible throughout the school year and to facilitate the highest level of learning. Please call the school office and talk with the school nurse with any concerns or information regarding your student's illness or health status that would be important for us to know (examples: diagnosis of concussion, seizures, anxiety, blood pressure monitoring, allergies, etc.)

MRSA Infections:

Staphylococcus aureus "Staph" is a bacteria commonly found on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. It is a common bacterium found widely in the environment. Sometimes, Staph bacteria cause infections. In the United States, Staph bacteria are the most common cause of skin infections, causing pimples, boils and abscesses. Some Staph bacteria have become resistant to common antibiotics, such as penicillin.

These more potent bacteria are called "Methicillin-resistant." In the past, these bacteria were found almost exclusively in hospitals. Recently, "MRSA" is being seen more and more in community settings, and is called community-associated MRSA, or CA-MRSA.

Staph skin infections, including MRSA, generally start as small red bumps that resemble pimples, boils, or spider bites. The involved area is swollen and red, painful, and pus may be present. The lesion will often get worse until proper treatment is begun.

The usual mode of transmission of MRSA is direct skin-to-skin contact between an infected person and another individual, often on contaminated hands. Factors related to transmitting Staph from one person to another or making a person more susceptible to infection include:

- Poor hygiene, especially lack of hand washing
- Close physical contact and crowded conditions
- Sharing personal products
- Contaminated laundry
- Shaving
- Lancing (puncturing/picking/piercing) boils with fingernails or tweezers
- Activities that result in burns, cuts or abrasions or require sharing equipment
- Intravenous drug use, unsanitary tattoos, and body piercing
- Inadequate access to proper medical care

Preventing CA-MRSA:

- **Wash your hands** (see above notation about hand washing).

- **Keep wounds covered.** Keep cuts and abrasions clean and covered with sterile, dry bandages until they heal. The pus from infected sores may contain MRSA, and keeping wounds covered will help keep the bacteria from spreading.
- **Keep personal items personal.** Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, sheets, razors, clothing and athletic equipment. MRSA spreads on contaminated objects as well as through direct contact.
- **Shower after athletic games or practices.** Shower immediately after each game or practice. Use soap and water. Don't share towels.
- **Sanitize linens.** If you have a cut or sore, wash towels and bed linen in a washing machine set to the hottest water setting (with added bleach, if possible) and dry them in a hot dryer. Wash gym and athletic clothes after each wearing.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation in regard to this information. Have a healthy school year!

Janet Adair, R.N., CPNP-PC

FACS School Health