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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Ella Boyd, VMD
Public Health Coordinator

October 19, 2007

Dear concerned resident:

In response to media coverage of methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) infections around the country this past week, the Ocean County Health Department has received numerous calls from concerned residents.

We understand that hearing about a “super bug” can be very frightening, particularly to parents. However it is important to keep in mind a few key facts about MRSA:

- MRSA is not a new disease. It has been a challenge to healthcare providers and the public health community since the 1960s. It was first primarily associated with hospitals. In the last several years, it has also become increasingly common in the community.
- MRSA is a type of bacterial infection that is resistant to **some, but not all** antibiotics. **It is treatable.**
- MRSA can cause skin infections. These infections result in redness, warmth, swelling, and tenderness. Often a MRSA infection will look like a spider bite, boil, abscess, or turf burn. If you or a family member has any of these symptoms, please contact your medical provider.
- If you are prescribed antibiotics, it is critical to take them as prescribed until finished. Even if you start to feel better or your condition improves.
- MRSA infections are usually spread by skin-to-skin contact or by direct contact with the drainage from the wound. They may also be spread by contact with contaminated surfaces or things such as sports equipment or personal hygiene items.
- MRSA skin infections are NOT spread through the air.

People who are infected with MRSA are permitted to attend school/work as long as they are compliant with infection control measures. Skin infections should be kept clean and bandaged.

I offer you the following recommendations on how to prevent MRSA infections;

- Educate yourself about MRSA and preventive behaviors.
- Encourage frequent hand washing. Any kind of soap is fine for hand washing. It does not need to be antibacterial.

- Encourage proper personal hygiene such as showering after sporting activities, wearing clean clothing, etc.
- Discourage the sharing of personal items such as clothing, towels, bar soap, sports equipment, etc.
- Ensure proper cleaning of surfaces with EPA approved disinfectants known to kill bacteria. Most common over the counter disinfectants will be effective if they have an EPA registration number on the back and state they are effective in killing bacteria.
- Make sure all wounds are bandaged properly.
- Consult your healthcare provider for evaluation of any suspicious skin lesion.

Please be aware of the signs and symptoms of MRSA. The Ocean County Health Department has posted a website which will act as a resource for you. This website can be found at www.ochd.org/mrsa. MRSA is treatable. However, if it is left untreated, it can become a serious illness.

Please be assured that the staff at the Ocean County Health Department are working with all the appropriate stakeholders to investigate every concern, minimize exposure and act as a resource for you. If you have any questions, I encourage you to please contact the Ocean County Health Department at (732) 341-9700.

Sincerely,

Ella Boyd, VMD

Dr. Ella Boyd, VMD
Public Health Coordinator
Ocean County Health Department