

How Parents Can Protect Their Kids against Staph Infections

The threat of drug-resistant bacteria infecting schoolchildren has been scaring parents across America, after a new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention made national headlines.

However, public health officials are cautioning parents not to overreact. "We know what works. We have the knowledge to prevent these infections; all we need is the will," said Betsy McCaughey, former lieutenant governor of New York and founder of the Committee to Reduce Infection Deaths. The following are 10 simple steps people can take to reduce their chances of getting a staph infection:

10 Ways to Help Prevent MRSA Infections

- Have students wash hands frequently with soap.
- Tuck a small container of hand sanitizer in your child's backpack.
- Clean with detergents all shared sports equipment and locker room facilities in schools. Let it stay on surfaces at least three minutes. Quickly spraying and wiping isn't effective.
- Test surfaces in gyms and classrooms to determine the extent of MRSA contamination.
- Warn students not to share gym clothes, towels and personal items.
- Install dispensers of hand sanitizers inside classrooms.
- Warn students against sharing soap bars. These can carry MRSA. Use pump dispensers only.
- Clean cuts or abrasions immediately. Put first aid kits in each classroom.
- Investigate using anti-microbial coatings for sports equipment and computer keyboards.
- Give athletes and coaches materials that help them prevent MRSA exposure.

Source: Committee to Reduce Infection Deaths and Judith Graham and Lolly Bowean, "Superbug, Putting Schools To The Test: Parents, State Put Heat On Educators To Increase Hygiene In Fight Against MRSA," Chicago Tribune, October 23, 2007.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/features/lifestyle/health/chi-mrsa.23aoct23,1,6595269.story>

Committee to Reduce Infection Deaths Web site: <http://www.hospitalinfection.org/>