

Staph Infections A Q&A Fact Sheet Prepared By Wolfe City ISD

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Reports of Staphylococcus (staph) infections have been in the news recently. Wolfe City health officials want to give parents information to help students stay healthy. Staph infections are common occurrences in schools each year. The district takes a number of steps to minimize the spread of staph and to educate students, staff, and parents about prevention.

What is staph?

Staph is an abbreviated form of the bacteria staphylococcus aureus. Staph infections can occur in healthy, non-hospitalized people and usually cause skin infections. In fact, many healthy people carry staph bacteria in their noses without ever getting sick. But when the skin is punctured or broken, staph bacteria can enter the wound and cause infection.

What does a staph infection look like?

The skin infection resembles pimples, boils, or spider bites. The infected area may appear red, feel hot, be painful, or cause itching.

How is staph spread?

Staphylococcus is found on many surfaces and commonly on our skin. It is spread by contact with contaminated surfaces such as those in a locker room particularly razors, deodorant, towels, bar soap, and athletic equipment, etc. It can be spread by skin to skin contact through minor skin abrasions, or intact skin.

How can staphylococcus infection be prevented?

Hand washing is the most important way to prevent staph infections. The Wolfe City athletic coaches and trainers are diligent in keeping locker rooms and equipment clean, and in teaching prevention to athletes. If you have any questions, please contact your school nurse or one of the Wolfe City athletic coaches.

Other preventative measures by individuals include:

- Keeping skin clean with a daily bath or shower
- Practicing good hand washing
- Covering all cuts or lesions at all times
- Cleaning equipment and changing areas with 70% alcohol, Lysol, 10% bleach solution, or other labeled disinfectant
- Avoiding sharing personal items such as towel, razors, uniforms, bar soap
- Washing all athletic clothing with laundry detergent and drying in a hot dryer

What is Wolfe City ISD doing to minimize spread of staph in locker rooms?

Each year our coaches and athletic trainers talk about preventative staph measures with the athletes. The maintenance, custodial, and coaching staff thoroughly clean the locker room areas daily with a disinfectants that kill staph. Lockers are kept clean and free of dirty clothing, only football related materials are in the athletes lockers. Individuals helmets, pads, mats, etc. are cleaned with disinfectant as well.

Can a student with staph still participate in extra-curricular activities?

Athletes who present with a suspicious rash are checked by the athletic coaches and referred to their physician as needed. All such rashes must be completely covered during games and practices. Situations are handled on a case by case basis dependent on the severity of the infection.

What should I do if I think I have a staph infection?

A suspicious rash or "spider bite" should be seen by a physician for diagnosis and appropriate antibiotic treatment. Like a cold that can progressively turn into pneumonia when left untreated, an untreated staph infection can progress to serious systemic infections. In most cases, however, the infection can easily be treated. Be sure to contact your child's principal, coach and/or school nurse if you believe your student has a staph infection.