



**Student Health Services
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Dear Campus Community:

There have been numerous reports in the news media recently about a public health issue of growing concern, an acquired skin infection called Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA). The purpose of this letter is to let you know that UNC Pembroke is aware of this threat and actively taking steps to minimize the chances of infection on our campus. We also want to remind you of the steps you can take to enhance your own protection against the risk of contracting MRSA.

Staphylococcus Aureus or “staph” is a common bacteria – so common that 25-30 percent of us have it living on our skin at any one time. MRSA is a less common variety of staph that isn’t affected by common antibiotics, such as penicillin. However, most MRSA infections can be treated with other types of antibiotics. MRSA usually infects people who are in hospitals or long-term care settings, but over the past 10 years it has become more of a problem outside of health care settings.

Most people who carry MRSA on their skin will never get sick from it. Infections usually occur when the bacteria get in through small scrapes or cuts, sometimes too small to notice.

Staph or MRSA infections in the community are usually manifested as skin infections, such as pimples, boils, or insect bites, and occur in otherwise healthy people. The involved site is red, swollen and painful and may contain pus or other drainage. Staph or MRSA infections not treated with the appropriate antibiotics can lead to more serious infections.

MRSA can be treated successfully with proper skin care and antibiotics. Infections are usually mild infections of the skin that are spread through direct physical contact with an infected person, or sometimes by touching objects (e.g. bandages, towels, sheets, clothing) that may be contaminated with the bacteria.

You can protect yourself from infections by practicing good hygiene:

- Wash hands frequently
- Shower after physical activity
- Never share personal hygiene items
- Cover any open sore on the skin when involved in contact sports or using exercise equipment
- Report any suspicious sores, pimple, boils, or open areas to a coach, trainer, Student Health Services, or another health professional
- Wipe surfaces of equipment before and after each use with disinfectant spray that is labeled as specifically effective in killing Staphylococcus Aureus

- Use a clean towel as a barrier between bare skin and surfaces like weight benches

People participating in athletic team activities should also:

- Immediately shower with soap and water after each game, meet or practice
- Keep abrasions or cuts covered with a clean dry bandage
- Change bandage at least daily
- Athletes with draining lesions should not participate in contact sports

There have been confirmed cases of MRSA in Robeson County. Professional staff from UNC Pembroke have met with representatives from the Robeson County Health Department and implemented several prevention techniques here on campus. Hand-washing posters are currently being placed in bathrooms in all buildings on campus.

The Campbell Fitness Center and the Caton Field House have put several protocols into practice to deal with the potential spread of MRSA. Disinfectant spray is available to anyone using the gym equipment. Instructions are given to persons using the exercise facilities to wipe down the equipment before and after use. Hand sanitizer, towels and posters explaining prevention techniques are also located throughout both exercise facilities. All of the equipment is cleaned by staff every night with a disinfectant spray that kills Staphylococcus Aureus infections.

If you have any questions or for further information, please contact UNC Pembroke Student Health Services at (910) 521-6219 or visit the CDC Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

Sincerely,

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