



# Press Release

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## **Department of Health & Human Services Reporting an Increase in Community-Acquired Staph Infections *Department Advises on Prevention***

(Little Rock--) The Department of Health & Human Services is reporting an increase in the number of community-acquired staph infections. Some 10 – 30 percent of the population carry *Staphylococcus aureus* (staph), bacteria on the skin or in the nose. Some staph are resistant to commonly-used antibiotics and, thus, are called methicillin-resistant Staph. aureus (MRSA). MRSA infection is usually spread in hospital and healthcare settings through direct physical contact or indirect contact with such items as contaminated towels, sheets, and wound dressings. However, in the last five to ten years, Arkansas and other states are reporting positive cases in patients that have not been in a hospital or healthcare facility.

At least 95 percent of community-acquired MRSA (CA-MRSA) infections appear on the skin or in the soft tissues. Most of these infections start out looking like a pimple or spider bite and may develop into boils or soft tissue infection. Most infections are usually mild and can be treated with oral antibiotics.

Persons most at risk for CA-MRSA include prison inmates, participants in competitive sports (especially contact sports like wrestling and football), injection drug users, homosexual men and close contacts of patients with MRSA infections.

Prevention is key. If you have a staph infection, here are some steps you can take to decrease the risk of exposure to your family and others around you:

- Cover all wounds with clean bandages, particularly those that produce drainage or pus.
- Wash your hands often, take frequent showers, and practice good hygiene.
- Don't share towels or personal items, such as razors, combs, clothing or sports equipment.
- Routinely clean any exercise equipment used by others.

If you think you have a staph infection, see your doctor. Coaches should be alert for skin infections and encourage athletes to seek medical treatment. For more information, including presentations and brochures on staph infection, click on <http://www.healthyarkansas.com/mrsa/information.html>.

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