

Staph Infections – A Q&A Fact Sheet Prepared By Carroll ISD

Reports of staphylococcus infections have been in the news recently. CISD 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. Staphylococcus 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 an 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 a staphylococcus infection be prevented?

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

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 towels, razors, uniforms, bar soap
- Washing all athletic clothing with laundry detergent and drying in a hot dryer.

What is Carroll ISD doing to minimize the spread of staph in locker rooms?

Each year our coaches and athletic trainers talk about preventative staph measures with the athletes. The maintenance and custodial staff thoroughly cleans the locker room areas weekly with a disinfectant that specifically targets and destroys staph. The locker rooms are also fogged once a week in an effort to prevent the spread of bacteria. Most recently, CISD requested that students empty their locker room lockers of all clothes and equipment each Wednesday to ensure they are taken home and washed thoroughly. This will also help ensure the entire locker is cleaned with the disinfectant. Everyday Clorox wipes are effective in washing down individual helmets, pads, mats, etc.

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

Athletes who present with a suspicious rash are checked by the athletic trainer 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 staphylococcus 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.