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OSCEOLA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT REMINDS THE PUBLIC TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM MRSA

Kissimmee – The Osceola County Health Department wants to remind the community of the steps to help prevent staph infections. Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to simply as "staph," is one of the most common causes of skin infections in the United States. The staph bacteria are commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of approximately one in four people. Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus or MRSA is a type of staph that is resistant to antibiotics called beta-lactams which include methicillin, penicillin, amoxicillin and oxacillin.

The occurrence of MRSA is on the rise in Florida as well as nationwide. Over the past several years, MRSA has become a concern among the athletic community, especially among participants of close contact sports. Clusters of MRSA infections have occurred among wrestlers, football players and even fencers.

Factors that have been associated with the spread of staph infections, including MRSA skin infections, include: close skin-to-skin contact, openings in the skin such as cuts or abrasions, contaminated items and surfaces, crowded living conditions, and poor hygiene.

The following are recommendations for preventing the occurrence and spread of staph and MRSA infections, especially among athletes. Everyone should become familiar with the signs and symptoms of infection and are encouraged to adhere to the following recommendations:

- Wash hands with soap and warm water frequently. If proper hand washing facilities are not available, a waterless, alcohol based hand sanitizer is an acceptable alternative
- Do not share personal items with others. Personal items include, but are not limited to: sporting equipment, clothes, sports jerseys, towels, razors and uniforms
- Shower daily with soap and warm water, especially after practice and competitions
- Wash clothes and linens in hot water, soap and bleach (if available)
- Dry clothes and linens in a hot dryer; heat helps kill the bacteria
- Conduct a visual skin check for open wounds and sores before, during and after games and practices
- Cover all wounds, particularly those that may be draining (wet), with a clean, dry bandage at all times
- See a healthcare provider immediately if a skin infection develops
- Only doctors should lance, pop or drain boils, wounds or other skin infections
- Avoid participating in contact sporting events until wounds/skin infections are healed

For further information, click on www.cdc.gov or call the Osceola County Health Department, Epidemiology Program at 407-343-2155.



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