

Dear Hatboro-Horsham High School Parent/Guardian,

You may have heard that a few students in our high school have been diagnosed with a staph infection. Recognizing that this type of news can be worrisome to parents and students, we believe it is important to provide you with accurate and current information about the situation. We hope this letter and the enclosed materials achieve that goal.

Staph are bacteria that are commonly found on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Sometimes, staph can cause an infection when it enters the body through open sores. Most infections are minor (such as pimples or boils), but sometimes staph can cause more serious problems (such as bloodstream infections or pneumonia). The type of staph that our students contracted is called MRSA (methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus), and is common among athletes who come in close personal contact during activities such as wrestling and football. It is spread through direct physical contact and not through the air.

From investigations conducted within the district, we have determined that the infection was acquired outside the high school at a wrestling camp. So far, we know of three confirmed cases and two unconfirmed cases receiving medical attention. Once the first case was discovered, the high school took immediate action by notifying families of fall athletes. Students with confirmed infections were suspended from play until they had been cleared by their doctors. We purchased federally-approved products designed to kill MRSA and continue to use them to clean hard equipment as well as athletic areas including locker rooms, training rooms and weight rooms. Any equipment used by students with suspected and confirmed cases has been discarded.

We were advised that the best way to kill staph on clothing is to wash the apparel in hot water with laundry detergent. Therefore, we asked athletes to wash uniforms and work-out clothing daily. Students are also being provided with disposable towels to wipe down their equipment. Skin checks are being conducted every other day by our athletic trainer. We are conducting meetings with all male athletes and female athletes to teach them about staph and what they can do to avoid infection.

We also contacted an expert at the Pennsylvania Department of Health who assured us that the District has taken appropriate proactive measures to contain the infection. Even though public reporting of MRSA is not required according to the state, we feel it is in the best interest of our students and their families to share this information. We continue to evaluate additional actions we can take to make sure this infection does not spread.

Enclosed you will find some information that will help you and your family be able to identify symptoms and prevent the spread of staph. You can also feel free to visit the district website at www.hatboro-horsham.org, for a link to the Center for Disease Control. If after reviewing this material you have further questions or concerns, please contact Mark Ridgway, our Athletic Director, at (215) 441-7912, or Tracy Sutton, our High School Nurse, at (215) 441-7900.

Sincerely,

Dennis M. Williams, Jr.
Principal