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PREVENTING STAPH INFECTIONS

Prevention of staph infections is so simple that many people do not imagine it could be effective – but it is:

- Wash hands frequently, both children and adults, whenever they are soiled or have been exposed to materials that may be contaminated.
- Schools provide soap in rest rooms so children can wash their hands effectively.
- Be careful when doing activities that may result in cuts and scratches.
- Wash cuts and scratches with soap and water and then keep them clean and dry.
- Keep skin infections such as boils or infected wounds covered and treat them promptly with both local care (such as drainage of boils) and appropriate antibiotics for the entire duration, as prescribed by your physician.
- Do not participate in contact sports if you have a skin infection unless the lesions can be securely covered.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, razors, or sports equipment that touches skin.
- Clean locker rooms and sports equipment routinely with a disinfectant.

Precautions like these can help Floridians avoid infection with *Staphylococcus aureus*, avoid increasing the rate of antibiotic resistance in our staph infections, and reduce illness and hospitalizations due to this sometimes serious disease.

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MRSA (methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus) is a type of Staphylococcus (staph) bacteria that is resistant to some antibiotics. Staph bacteria is everywhere -- with one-third of people carrying it in their nasal passages. It is present on most surfaces. Most staph and MRSA infections are treatable with antibiotics and proper care for the sore. Students being treated for a staph infection can return to school without endangering other students. The Florida Department of Health does not recommend closing schools for cleaning when children have skin infections caused by staph because it is not an effective means of protecting children. The most effective way to prevent MRSA and many other infections such as the common cold, flu and common stomach illnesses is through frequent handwashing. Proper handwashing includes rubbing soapy hands together for 20 seconds. Use an alcohol gel sanitizer when you cannot wash your hands.

If you or someone you know suspects they may have a staph infection that is not healing properly, please contact your medical provider.

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