

News



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Governor Rell Directs Health Department to Hold Symposiums on MRSA in Schools and Other Community Settings

Toll-Free MRSA Telephone Hotline To Be Launched on Monday

Governor M. Jodi Rell today directed the state Department of Public Health to hold symposiums on Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) in schools and other community settings such as universities and daycare centers in response to recent cases of infection of public school students by Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) that have recently been reported in Connecticut.

Governor Rell also asked the state Department of Public Health to activate a public hotline for callers who have questions about MRSA. Starting Monday, October 22nd, the public can call 1-800-830-9426 between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. and speak to a representative of the Department of Public Health.

“The cases of MRSA have raised understandable concerns among school officials, students, teachers and parents,” Governor M. Jodi Rell said. “Because awareness and education are the keys to preventing MRSA, I have asked the state health department to convene a number of forums of health experts that school and university officials, athletic directors, parents and other interested groups can attend to discuss and receive information about the growing issue of MRSA.”

Dates, times and locations of the forums will be announced in the near future.

MRSA is usually contracted by direct skin-to-skin contact with someone infected or by touching surfaces contaminated with the germ, thus students on sports teams or students using lavatories or locker rooms should take extra precautions. They are rarely fatal in previously healthy young people. Good hygiene is the best way to avoid infection from MRSA.

Cases of MRSA are reportable to the Department of Public Health (Connecticut was the first state in the nation to require such reports). Health officials reported that in 2005, 954 MRSA infections were reported to the state Department of Public Health. In 2006, 880 cases were reported. MRSA infections can range from mild skin infections to more severe infections of the bloodstream, lungs and at surgical sites.

Health officials advise the following to avoid becoming infected with MRSA:

- Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.
- If you have a wound or cut that is not healing properly, contact your physician

Earlier this week, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a study that included data from Connecticut indicating that MRSA caused more than 94,000 life-threatening infections and nearly 19,000 deaths in the United States in 2005, most of them associated with health care settings.

Yesterday, Governor Rell sent a letter to all school districts advising them that the State Department of Public Health is monitoring cases of MRSA in Connecticut. The letter also included practical advice to teachers, parents and school nurses about preventing and treating MRSA infections.

“It is important to note that MRSA is preventable and treatable, and that we can all take steps to reduce exposure to our students and staff,” Governor Rell said. “Good information about prevention measures will go a long way in the effort to contain and reduce MRSA cases.”

The study in the Oct. 17 edition of the Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA) found about 85 percent of all invasive MRSA infections were associated with health care settings, of which two-thirds surfaced in the community among people who were hospitalized, underwent a medical procedure or resided in a long-term care facility within the previous year. In contrast, about 15 percent of reported infections were considered to be community-associated, which means that the infection occurred in people without documented health care risk factors.

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