

the Putnam Valley Health Advisory Council presents . . .

# the HAC Helpline #15

for the Students and Families of the Putnam Valley Central School District

With recent publicity about **Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)**, we want to reinforce the importance of good hygiene & communication with your private healthcare provider.

The best way to prevent the spread of any infection is frequent hand washing with warm water and soap, especially after using the bathroom. Students in school athletic programs are encouraged to shower with soap and hot water after participating in contact sports or after sharing exercise or athletic equipment. Students should be discouraged from sharing personal items such as water bottles, soap, towels, razors, and clothing or uniforms that can be contaminated with CA-MRSA. To decrease transmission, a towel or layer of clothing can be used as a barrier between the body and surfaces of shared equipment such as benches and exercise machines. If your child shows signs of a skin infection, redness, swelling, thick yellow drainage, call your doctor for advice.

**In Putnam Valley, we take hygiene very seriously. In 2006-07 year we installed hands-free soap dispensers in all restroom, labs, staff lounges and kitchens. We also installed hands-free hand sanitizers in the food lines and school health offices.**

Excerpts from **Community-Associated Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (CA-MRSA) - Fact Sheet**  
(NY State Department of Health)

- **What is Staphylococcus aureus?** Staphylococcus aureus (S. aureus) is a bacteria normally found on the skin or in the nose of 20 to 30 percent of healthy individuals. Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a strain of S. aureus that is resistant to methicillin, an antibiotic in the same class as penicillin, and is traditionally seen in people who have been recently hospitalized or treated at a health care facility (such as treatment at a dialysis center).

- **What is CA-MRSA?** Community-associated MRSA infections (CA-MRSA) are MRSA infections in healthy people who have not been hospitalized or had a medical procedure (such as dialysis or surgery) within the past year.

- **Who gets CA-MRSA?** Anyone can get CA-MRSA, however outbreaks have been seen among athletes, prisoners, military recruits, daycare attendees, injection drug users and other groups of people who live in crowded settings and/or routinely share contaminated items. Poor hygiene practices, such as lack of hand washing, may spread the bacteria easily.

- **What are the symptoms associated with CA-MRSA infection?** CA-MRSA infections typically begin as skin infections. They first appear as reddened areas on the skin, or can resemble pimples that develop into skin abscesses or boils causing fever, pus, swelling, or pain.

- **How are CA-MRSA infections treated?** CA-MRSA skin infections can be treated by draining any abscesses or boils and providing localized care. Antibiotics can be given if necessary. When left untreated, CA-MRSA infections can progress to serious complications. Visit your health care provider if you think you might have a MRSA infection.

- **How is it transmitted?** CA-MRSA is spread in the same way as an MRSA infection, mainly through person-to-person contact or contact with a contaminated item such as a towel, clothing or athletic equipment. Bacteria that exist normally on the skin cause CA-MRSA and so it is possible to infect a pre-existing cut not protected by a dressing or other bandage.

- **How can the spread of CA-MRSA be controlled?** Careful hand washing is the single most effective way to control the spread of CA-MRSA. Skin infections caused by MRSA should be covered until healed, especially to avoid spreading the infection to others. Family members and others with close contact should wash their hands frequently with soap and water. Personal items that may be contaminated should not be shared. Both the CDC and the NCAA have issued recommendations for preventing the spread of MRSA among athletes. These include practicing good personal hygiene, including showering after practices and competitions and not sharing personal items such as towels. For additional information please visit the CDC's website at [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar\\_mrsa\\_ca\\_public.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_ca_public.html)

## Quick Facts

- **Keep it Clean!** Wash hands and shower using soap and water.
- **You can use an alcohol-based hand gel if hands are not visibly soiled.**
- **Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage, including when participating in sport activities.**
- **Don't share personal items such as water bottles, soap, towels, razors, and clothing or uniforms.**
- **Contact your healthcare provider if you notice any small red bumps that resemble pimples or spider bites that develop any redness, swelling or tenderness.**

## About the PV Health Advisory Council

For more than 15 years, The Putnam Valley Health Advisory Council has been quietly taking responsibility for improving the health, safety, and well being of the children of the PVCSD, as well as the community at large. This group of teachers, parents, physicians, nurses, law enforcement, administrators and students meets monthly throughout the school year and the summer and sponsors community events and programs aimed at educating and informing the children and parents of Putnam Valley.