

Blue Devil E-News

Staph Infections put schools in state of concern CISD executes guidelines for prevention program

By Nancy Longino

Schools across the region are reporting outbreaks of staph infections, including an antibiotic-resistant strain. According to the UIL report sent to CISD Superintendent Collin Clark, many of the infections are being spread in gyms and locker rooms, where students and athletes — perhaps suffering from cuts or abrasions — share sports equipment. Staphylococcus aureus bacteria infections generally are not life-threatening. However, the Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) strain can be especially stubborn. MRSA, pronounced "mersa," resists treatment with penicillin and related antibiotics but can be treated with other drugs. MRSA got its foothold in hospitals and in recent years has spread to other community settings, including schools. Seeing the need during the 2006-2007 school year for fast action for a prevention plan, Mr. Clark started setting up some guidelines and procedures for the CISD staff to follow. Once the SHAC (Student Healthcare Advisory Committee) — a committee made up of healthcare officials such as paramedics, nurses, parents, and members of the business community reviewed the proposed guidelines, the plan was approved and set in action. "Our desire was to be out ahead of the game and to be one of the first ones out of the starting gate for the protection of our students," said Committee Chairperson Mrs. Dana Clark.

The same guidelines for prevention will again be implemented for the 2007-2008 school year. CISD School nurse, Mrs. Shannon Milton, was busy at the Fall Festival handing out educational flyers on Staphylococcus to parents and community members to help distribute information out to the general public. The same educational information has been sent home to all athletes: outlining education on the disease and cleaning procedures for prevention of infection. Mrs. Milton has been conducting educational campus staff meetings. Mr. Mark Harrison, head of Maintenance at CISD has trained all custodians and coaches on the correct application of a special spray/fog that is part of a complex disinfecting system. Coaches have been emphasizing the importance of cleanliness in the gyms, training facilities, and locker rooms. All campus restrooms, dressing rooms and weight rooms along with athletic equipment are being sprayed nightly after thorough cleansing. Soap dispensers in all restrooms, locker rooms and showers contain antibacterial soap.

Cleanliness is the most important consideration when dealing with staph infections, and we want to strongly emphasize the importance of and to encourage students to keep their hands and clothes clean as a further preventive measure. It takes the involvement of everyone to make the plan successful and for our goal of complete prevention to be accomplished.