

# Area school districts urged to take precautions against staph infection

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The closing this week of several Dayton area schools and Troy Christian School because of staph infection prompted Logan County Health District officials to send out information about the skin infection to area schools and various health professionals. The most common form of skin infection in the U.S., staph infection, formally known as staphylococcus aureus, has not closed any Logan County schools. However, one isolated incident was investigated by the health district at Western Intermediate School. Bellefontaine City Schools' Superintendent Larry Anderson, Ph.D., said the incident happened several weeks ago and involved one student. "We followed protocol by contacting the health district and sending a note home to parents, and now it looks like everything has cleared up," he said.

"Apparently, we caught it early enough that it was able to be controlled."

Staphylococci are very common in the environment and can be found on the skin and in the nasal cavities of healthy people, said Kay Schroer, health district infectious disease nurse.

"It usually doesn't cause any problems," she said.

However, if a break in the skin, such as a cut or an abrasion, occurs, then staphylococci can enter the body, causing an infection, Ms. Schroer said.

Other causes of staph infection are close skin-to-skin contact with an infected person, contact with contaminated items or surfaces, crowded living conditions and poor hygiene, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Staph infection usually manifests itself as skin infections that look like boils or

pimples and can be red, swollen or have pus or other drainage.

Ms. Schroer advised individuals who show these symptoms to see their physician as soon as possible to avoid more serious issues like pneumonia or bloodstream infections.

"Most infections are minor, but can become serious if people don't take care of them," she said.

According to the CDC, staph infections may be treated with antibiotics, or a physician may drain the abscess or boil. Ms. Schroer said hand washing is the most important step to prevention of staph infection.

"Our hands remain the most important vehicle for transmission of staph infection," she said. "Hand washing cannot be overemphasized."

The CDC and the Logan County Health District recommend several other steps to avoid staph infections:

- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Always use good personal hygiene.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.
- Clean and disinfect locker rooms, weight rooms and equipment on a regular basis.

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