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**Staph infections reported locally**

**By Joel E. Mast and Mandy Hochstedler**  
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Additional cases of staphylococcus aureus, more commonly known as staph infection, have been confirmed at two area schools, after the *Bellefontaine Examiner* questioned school administrators.

Huntsville Elementary Principal Kyle Wagner said this morning that four students were sent home Thursday for possible cases of staph infection.

The school building, which is closed for district-wide COTA Day, is being disinfected today, he said.

According to Riverside Local School's Superintendent Bernie Pachmayer, the district had three confirmed cases of the skin infection approximately four weeks ago.

The Logan County Health District confirmed one case of staph infection at Western Intermediate School in an Oct. 12 *Examiner* article. Mrs. Pachmayer said the school had contacted the health district as well as sent letters about its staph infections to all families in the district.

Health Board Commissioner Dr. Boyd Hoddinott MD said health officials have been working with all the county schools over the past month to educate coaches and athletic directors about stemming the spread of staph.

It can take time and money, but the districts have to properly clean athletic facilities and equipment, Dr. Hoddinott said. Coaches have to stress personal hygiene and make sure open wounds are covered properly.

Doctor's offices and nursing homes also have been informed of the issue.

"It (staph) is a common problem," Dr. Hoddinott said. "In my own practice, I used to see maybe one case a month. Now I'm seeing a case or so a week.

"Most cases are the non-invasive type and can be taken care of with the proper treatment."

Two Riverside High School football players contracted the infection and a fifth-grade student, who is a Little Pirates football player, also was diagnosed with a staph infection, Mrs. Pachmayer said.

The three students have been treated and are doing well, the superintendent said.

The school's weight room, which is not attached to the school building, has since been disinfected and the district will continue to disinfect the facility.

Riverside High School Principal Mike Edwards said athletes at the school are encouraged to take home their work out clothes every night, instead of leaving their clothes in the locker room.

"We are emphasizing to our students that good hygiene is very important," he said.

Staphylococci are actually 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 diseases nurse.

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

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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.

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