

Skin Infections

Skin infections, particularly those in student athletes, have been in the news recently. The Baltimore County Office of Health Services and Baltimore County Department of Health would like to share the following information with you:

- Skin infections are relatively common.
- Skin infections are caused by a variety of germs, including staphylococcus (“staph”)
- Most skin infections can be easily treated with antibiotics. Some strains of the germs that cause skin infections are considered “resistant” to some antibiotics (i.e., MRSA); in most cases, these infections can be effectively treated with other antibiotics.
- Skin infections are primarily spread by direct contact from one person to another – from skin to skin contact. They may also be spread indirectly after contact with a surface or item recently contaminated by an infected person (towel, clothing, razor, bandage, locker room and sports equipment surfaces).
- Signs of a skin infection vary. Skin infections can appear as a non-healing wound with red edges and discolored drainage or as a red swollen painful area on the skin that looks like a pimple or boil.
- To prevent transmission of skin infections in school, BCPS follows these infection control practices:
 1. All possible skin infections must be covered and contained. Usually this means the wound is covered with a bandage and then covered a second time with clothing.
 2. Students with skin infections that cannot be covered and contained (e.g., on the face, heavy drainage) are excluded from school until they are treated by a doctor and cleared to return to school.
 3. Athletic directors have trained coaches of high school sports teams on signs of skin infections. Students with suspicious wounds are evaluated by the school nurse to ensure no transmission in athletic events.
- Parents can help reduce the likelihood of their child getting a skin infection by reinforcing the following good health habits:
 1. Encourage regular hand washing. Student athletes should shower as soon as possible after sports practices and games. This is especially important if skin is abraded or chaffed.
 2. Discourage the sharing of all personal items, including clothing, water bottles, and towels.
 3. Monitor your child for signs of skin infection. If you see a suspicious wound, consult with your child’s physician and/or the school nurse.
 4. Keep cuts and scrapes covered with a bandage until healed.

For additional information on steps to prevent skin infections, please call the Office of Health Services at 410-887-6368.