

# Good Hygiene Is Key To Preventing MRSA

(NAPSA)—Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is a germ with a big name that is suddenly causing big problems for schools and communities. Commonly referred to as a “superbug,” MRSA is a kind of bacteria that causes staph infections that do not respond to treatment with common antibiotics, such as penicillins. Until recently, cases of MRSA were most commonly seen in hospitals and health care facilities; however, a growing number of reported infections are now emerging in the general population.

“Whether it’s in a hospital or at a school, MRSA is usually transmitted by direct skin-to-skin contact,” said Kathleen G. Beavis, MD, FCAP, a pathologist at Stroger Hospital of Cook County (formerly Cook County Hospital) in Chicago. Pathologists are the physicians who examine cells and tissue to diagnose diseases and illnesses; Dr. Beavis specializes in microbiology and infectious diseases, such as MRSA.

“What most people may be unaware of is that an individual does not have to appear sick—or present symptoms—to carry this type of bacteria on their bodies. In fact, these individuals are the most common source of transmission,” said Dr. Beavis.

In addition to direct contact with an infected person, MRSA bacteria can live on common surfaces, such as a table, for weeks and can

## Tips To Prevent MRSA

- Regular hand washing
- Cover cuts with bandages



be transmitted when someone touches it. If a person does contract MRSA, the infection will most likely appear as a skin infection in the form of pustules or boils, which are often red, swollen, painful or have pus or other drainage. These skin infections commonly occur at the sites of visible skin trauma, such as cuts and scrapes, and areas of the body covered by hair. Most MRSA-related skin infections can be effectively treated, with or without antibiotics, by draining the pus.

“Because MRSA has been in health care settings for years, most health care workers are familiar with the precautions to take to protect themselves and their patients,” said Dr. Beavis. “With the recent cases of students coming in contact with this kind of bacteria at schools, it is important for everyone to practice good personal hygiene, such as regular hand washing and covering cuts with bandages, to reduce their chances of contracting or spreading this potentially life-threatening type of bacteria.”

For more information regarding MRSA and what you can do to protect yourself from getting it, visit the College of American Pathologists’ Web site at [cap.org](http://cap.org).