

CA MRSA: AN OLD ENEMY WITH NEW TRICKS

Gwen M. Borlaug, Health and Family Services

The discovery of penicillin and other antibiotics in the 1940s ended an era when germs killed more soldiers in war than bullets. These medicines were so powerful against staphylococcus, (staph) and other bacteria they were hailed as “magic bullets” and scientists declared victory over infectious diseases once and for all. But alas staph retaliated with such rapid and effective countermeasures as to evoke envy among even the most savvy bioterrorism preparedness planners.

Resistant staph, called methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* or “MRSA” first appeared in the United States in the late 1970s and until recently spread primarily among hospital patients, nursing home residents, and chronically ill persons. Now a new strain of MRSA, called community acquired, or CA MRSA, is causing infections in healthy persons with no history of health care contact.

CA MRSA usually causes mild skin infections such as boils or abscesses which to many resemble spider bites. Occasionally it causes serious skin infections and in rare cases life-threatening pneumonia, meningitis, or blood stream infections.

Anyone can get a CA MRSA infection but contact sports team members, prisoners, military recruits, and children under age two are especially susceptible. Factors that increase the chances of acquiring a CA MRSA infection are skin-to-skin contact, cuts, cracks, or abrasions in the skin, crowded living conditions, and poor hygiene.

Not all is doom and gloom, however, and the good news is although several antibiotics are ineffective against CA MRSA, many antibiotics still work. Some infections can even be cured by drainage alone with no need for antibiotics. A health care provider is best able to determine appropriate care for a particular condition.

There's more good news. Although everyone is susceptible, simple habits that keep skin clean and healthy can help protect against CA MRSA infections.

Keep skin clean

- Wash hands often. Alcohol hand sanitizer is a good alternative when soap and water are not available.
- Shower after heavy exercise or athletic activities. Avoid using personal items such as razors, towels, or clothing from an infected person.
- Clean exercise and sports equipment before use. Ask health club personnel to provide cleaning supplies in convenient locations.

Keep skin healthy

- Wear gardening gloves in the yard or sports gloves at the gym to prevent cuts and scrapes on hands.
- Wear protective clothing when exercising or playing sports.
- Cover cuts and sores with bandages to keep bacteria out.
- Moisturize with lotions to keep skin from cracking.

If you have a CA MRSA skin infection, be sure to follow your provider's instructions on wound care and use of antibiotics and other medications. Tell your doctor if symptoms get worse or don't improve within a few days.

Help prevent transmission in the workplace by washing hands often, especially after touching infected wounds or dressings, and keep wounds covered with clean bandages or dressings. It is best to stay home if drainage cannot be contained. Place heavily soiled bandages and dressings in a plastic bag and seal before discarding into regular trash containers.

For more information on CA MRSA visit the

DHFS website at <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/resources/HlthProvider.htm>.

Also see the hand washing fact sheet at <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/factsheets/Handwashing.htm>.

“Resistant staph, called “MRSA” first appeared in the United States in the late 1970s.”

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Cheryl Lossman, Health and Family Services

My name is Cheryl Lossman and I am a member of the Joint Health & Safety Committee. I am employed at Southern Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled (SWC) in Union Grove.

Southern Wisconsin Center opened on February 14, 1919 and continues to be a state-operated intermediate care facility that specializes in serving individuals with developmental disabilities, often combined with mental illness and certain problem behaviors. The mission at Southern Wisconsin Center is to provide quality residential care and treatment to Wisconsin citizens with developmental disabilities when this care cannot be provided by local human service agencies. SWC strives to prepare the individuals for integration into mainstream living. The Center works individually and in cooperation with other agencies to provide support to families of persons with developmental disabilities and education and training services to area communities.

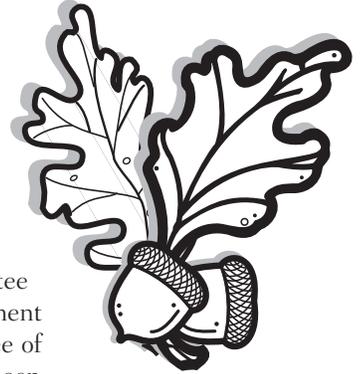
During my 25-year tenure as a state employee I have spent the majority of it working at SWC. Currently I am an Office Associate and work with the Chief Psychologist. I have found this to be a rather interesting department to work in. I have

enjoyed working in different departments, as that is what I enjoy most – meeting people. It has opened my eyes to many things around the SWC campus as well as around the State of Wisconsin.

I recently served on a committee that included DHFS management and WSEU labor from all three of the developmental disabilities centers: DHFS and WSEU Study Group on Options for SWC Mission and Programs. Together we made proposals to then DHFS Secretary Helene Nelson regarding ways for SWC to provide assistance to the community for those with special needs.

My current role with the WSEU Local 892 is as secretary and steward. I have held the positions of Vice President and President. Our union represents approximately 600+ members, represented across our campus: Southern Wisconsin Center, Southern Oaks Girls School, Wisconsin Veterans Home – Union Grove and Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Union Grove.

The Joint Health & Safety committee is another new venture for me, and I appreciate this opportunity that I've been given to meet the members and look forward to working with them.



INJURIES REDUCED FOR 6TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR!

Workplace injuries to state employees that result in a worker's compensation claim have dropped for the sixth consecutive fiscal year. For claims reported as of August 1 2007, the total number of worker's compensation claims dropped 3.2% to 3,275 compared to 3,384 for the same reporting period for FY06. In 1993 the state reached its all time high of 5,247 claims. The FY07 total is a reduction of almost 2,000 claims and a 38% reduction from 1993.

The most serious workplace injuries, lost time and hazardous duty claims, also decreased for the sixth consecutive year. There were 662 claims reported for FY07 compared to 706 for FY06, which represents a 6.2% decrease. The State of Wisconsin's highest number of lost time and hazardous duty claims also was

in 1993. In that year, 1,686 claims were filed. The 662 claims for FY07 represent a 60% decrease from 1993 and a reduction of 1,024 claims.

"The numbers really speak for themselves about the effort being made by employees, supervisors and managers across the state to provide a safe work environment," states Rollie Boeding, Director of State Risk Management in the Department of Administration. "The agencies, institutions and campuses across Wisconsin are continuing to work hard to develop safer conditions and safer work practices. The results prove that hard work and commitment pay off!"

"The reduction in the more serious lost time and hazardous duty claims is significant," states Boeding. "In 1993 we were incurring 4.6 claims per day compared to 1.8 claims per day in FY07. We need to celebrate our accomplishments, but we still need to focus on the fact that even one claim per day is one claim too many! We can continue to make progress and reduce the numbers even further if every employee, supervisor and manager takes personal accountability for their own safety and the safety of the employees around them. Staying focused and being continually aware of safety opportunities is key to our future success."

TOP 5 INJURY CAUSES IN FY07 AND HOW TO PREVENT THEM

Jim Nelson, State Risk Management

The top five major causes of work-related injuries have not changed over the past six years. These causes represent 70% of the total workplace injuries that occurred in the State of Wisconsin during FY07. Fortunately most if not all of these types of injuries can be prevented if employees, supervisors and managers maintain a constant awareness for workplace hazards and continuously focus on working safely.

“Lifting, Moving or Restraining Loads” continues to top the list of injury causes totaling 630 injuries for the fiscal year. These injuries can be reduced both at home and work by using alternative methods such as mechanical assistance, breaking down the load into smaller units, or by asking a co-worker for help. Learn how to safely lift, move and restrain loads by taking advantage of manual materials handling training programs in and out of work. Physically prepare yourself by maintaining your health and fitness so you are physically capable of performing the tasks.

Wisconsin’s second leading cause of work-related injuries is “Slips, Trips and Falls”; resulting in 589 injuries during the last fiscal year. Awareness is the critical component to preventing these injuries and many others. Since walking is considered second nature we often don’t pay attention to potential walking surface hazards. Be aware of materials covering walking surfaces that increase risk of a slip, trip or fall such as snow, ice, liquids, stones, uneven surfaces, power cords, electrical wires, and loose debris. The presence of these types of materials greatly increases the potential for an accident and should be removed when discovered. Finally, wear footwear that is appropriate for the walking surfaces and the hazards that may be encountered at home and at work.

Number three on the list of causes is “Injured by an Encounter with an Object”; accounting for 426 injuries. Injuries of this type include being hit by objects such as a door, tool, tree branch or other projectile or simply an employee running into something with their head or other body part. These types of accidents can be prevented by increasing awareness of surroundings. Take a little extra time to be aware of the potential object hazards in your environment that could cause an injury.

The fourth major cause of work-related injuries is the “Encounter with an Offender, Inmate, Client or Patient.” Last fiscal year there were 338 injuries caused by encounters with other people. Preventing these types of injuries requires a constant vigil of those around you and being adequately prepared to respond. Departments that experience these injuries have training programs and procedures to manage “encounter with people” hazards and to reduce injuries. Employees are encouraged to participate in training programs to learn techniques to

enhance their awareness and protect themselves to the fullest extent possible.

“Motion of the Individual,” is the fifth leading cause and resulted in 316 injuries last year. Most of these motion injuries result from employees running, climbing, stepping up, stepping down, or bending and reaching. Motion injuries are impossible to avoid, but injuries sustained can be significantly decreased by the employee’s overall body health and fitness. Stretching before, during and after duties should be routine and would assure the employee is physically able to perform the job tasks assigned is crucial.

The same five causes for work-related injuries have remained the most prevalent for six consecutive fiscal years. This fact suggests a need for increased effort in educating employees on how to identify and avoid hazardous actions in these areas. Whether it is asking a co-worker for assistance in moving a large container, thoroughly inspecting a walking surface for loose debris, or attending an instructional training program, small changes and increased awareness can lead to significant safety improvements in a work environment.



ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOME

Jim Nelson, State Risk Management

The vast majority of Americans report feeling the safest in their homes. Yet home-injury statistics prove that homes across the nation aren't as safe as many may think. Home safety varies with our life stages. Common to all life stages is electrical safety; the following is a compendium of electrical safety tips from various sources.

Working Safely Outdoors

- Keep all vehicles, equipment, tools and people at least 10 feet away from overhead power lines. This is especially important when using long-handled tools or ladders.¹
- When pruning trees check for power lines that may run through or near trees.¹
- Use extension cords marked for outdoor use. An indoor extension cord used outdoors can result in electric shock or cause a fire hazard.¹
- When excavating, call Digger's Hotline at (800) 242-8511 or (414) 259-1181 at least 3 days before commencing work; it is the law, it's free and also it is for your safety.²

Use Electrical Tools Wisely¹

- Never use electrical tools in the rain or in wet areas.
- Do not use electrically powered lawn mowers on wet grass.
- Use three-pronged outlets and plugs and use properly-rated extension cords.
- Inspect and maintain your electrical tools regularly. Look for frayed power cords, broken plugs or cracked housings.

Home Electrical Safety

- Regularly check outlets and extension cords to make sure they are not overloaded or frayed.¹
- Use extension cords only when necessary and only on a temporary basis.
- Teach children not to play with plugs and outlets. Put plastic plugs in unused outlets.¹
- Do not let cords dangle from counter or table tops as they can be pulled down or tripped over.¹ Keep cords away from pets that may chew on them.
- When unplugging equipment, do not pull on the cord itself. Instead pull by the plug.¹
- Make sure the proper wattage light bulbs are being used in light fixtures and lamps.¹
- Install ground fault circuit interrupters in areas that can get wet.¹ Install arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCI) to provide enhanced protection from fires resulting from arcing and sparking conditions in home wiring.³

Power Outages⁴

- Call your electric utility immediately to report the outage.
- During an outage, turn-off electrical appliances and unplug major equipment, including air conditioners, computers and

televisions. This will help protect equipment from electrical surges and will prevent circuit overloads when power is restored. Leave one light on to indicate that power has been restored. Wait a few minutes then turn on other appliances and equipment one at a time.

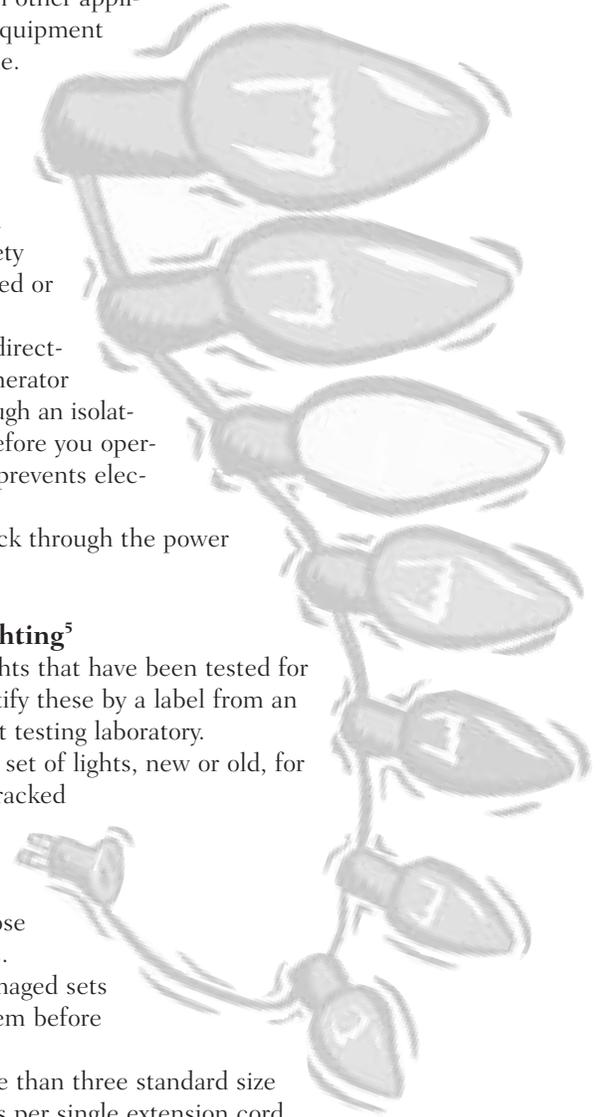
- If you use a standby generator, make sure a transfer safety switch is used or connect the appliances directly to the generator output through an isolated circuit before you operate it. This prevents electricity from traveling back through the power lines.

Holiday Lighting⁵

- Use only lights that have been tested for safety. Identify these by a label from an independent testing laboratory.
- Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. Discard damaged sets or repair them before using.
- Use no more than three standard size sets of lights per single extension cord.
- Turn off all lights on trees and other decorations when you go to bed or leave the house. Lights could short and start a fire.
- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree.

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THE TRUTH ABOUT TRANS FAT

Mary Fayyaz R.N., Health & Family Services

There have been a lot of headlines recently about trans fat – New York City restaurants plan to be trans fat free and McDonald’s French fries will be without trans fat within the year. Labels are popping up with “No trans fat” but what does this mean? What is trans fat and where does it come from?

Where Does Trans Fat Come From?

Small amounts of trans fat occur naturally in foods such as beef, lamb, and milk, but the trans fat that is a problem is put there by food manufacturers to give products better taste and texture and make them last longer. Food manufacturers do this by a process known as hydrogenation. Manufactured trans fat is used in a wide variety of foods including margarine, shortening, cake, frosting, snack foods, doughnuts, and many fried foods. Fast-food fried foods are one of the biggest contributors to the trans fat problem in the American diet.

The Truth About Trans Fat Free

Trans fat is one of the unhealthiest fats in the American diet. That’s because trans fat not only raises LDL or the “bad” cholesterol but also lowers HDL or the “good” cholesterol. In fact, trans fat is so harmful, the Institute of Medicine says there is no safe level of intake and recommends consuming as little as possible of this fat.

The American Heart Association has put a number on this, advising Americans to limit their intake to 1% of total calories. For a 1,800 calorie-a-day diet, that’s less than 2 grams of trans fat a day. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration now requires food manufacturers to list the amount of this fat on the Nutrition Facts panel. It’s listed below saturated fats.

Food manufacturers have developed trans-fat-free versions of many of our favorite foods. Don’t be fooled. Zero does not necessarily mean zero. The government allows manufacturers to say their product has no trans fat if it has less than half (.5) a gram per serving. This is also true for saturated fat. If you eat more than one serving of chips or cookies, you may have consumed close to 1 gram or more of trans fat. Add fried chicken and French fries and it’s easy to consume far more than your daily recommended total.

The Unhealthy Trans Fat Substitute

When food manufacturers eliminate trans fat, they need to replace it with something to maintain the product’s taste, texture and shelf life. They often replace with one bad fat for another – saturated fat.

As you know, this fat is not good for your health either. It also raises your LDL and may be even more important to limit than trans fat, because it makes up a larger portion of the American diet.

Food manufacturers are working to find substitutes for trans fat, however they have found few thus far. And the ones they have identified are often too expensive or not available at this time in large enough amounts.

Losing the Trans Fat

Now that trans fat are on food labels, many food manufacturers are searching for ways to eliminate them from their products. The Frito-Lay Company is cooking Cheetos, Doritos, Sun and Lays chips in corn and sunflower oils instead of hydrogenated oil to get out the trans fat.

Kraft has also refashioned their reduced-fat Oreo cookies to lose the trans fat and eliminate most of the trans fat from Triscuits, Wheat Thins, Chips Ahoy, Mallomars, Boca products and Honey Maid low-fat Cinnamon Grahams. The same is true for some Girl Scout cookies (including Thin Mints).

Kellogg has reduced trans fat in their Pop Tarts and Cheez-It crackers by using soybean oil, which lessens the need for hydrogenated oil while Gorton’s is frying its fish sticks and fillets in healthier oils. Even Crisco shortening comes in a trans fat free formula.

Unlike food manufacturers, most restaurants and food chains continue to use hydrogenated fats to fry French fries and other fast foods. Chain restaurants in the area that are breaking away from using trans fat are Panera Bread and Wendy’s with McDonald’s in the near future.

You can find trans fat free food at the Whole Food grocery chains. In fact, this chain has never sold products with partially hydrogenated oils.

Cherry Picking Your Trans Fat Free Products

So how can you reduce the possible trans fats and saturated fats you take in from products labeled trans-fat free? It’s as simple as reading the ingredients list.

If the ingredients list mentions partially hydrogenated oil, or hydrogenated oil, or shortening, the product isn’t technically trans-fat free. Also pay attention to your portion size. If you eat 2 servings of potato chips or cookies, you should estimate that you are getting 1 gram of trans fat even if it states it’s trans fat free. Always check the portion size. We seldom eat one cookie or 6 chips.

Also be on the look-out for palm-oil, palm kernel oil, and coconut oil in the ingredient list. While they are vegetable oils, they are unhealthy, saturated fats.

Be an informed, healthy consumer, by reading labels and limiting foods fried in saturated fats.

(The John Hopkins White Papers on Nutrition)

A NEW TOMORROW IN A GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT



The 2007 State Risk Management Conference will be held on November 7-8, 2007 at the Exhibition Hall of the Alliant Energy Center in Madison, Wisconsin.

The 2007 conference will be the 15th annual event hosted by the Bureau of State Risk Management.

It continues to provide an opportunity for you to learn more about the risk management issues of the day within our state, nation and throughout the world.

The keynote presentation on Wednesday, November 7, will focus on the challenge that all organizations face, managing environmental and social responsibility risks. These challenges include climate change and how these same factors can threaten governments and their ability to provide security and essential services.

The conference will close on Thursday, November 8 with a presentation titled "The Art of Being Positively Selfish." In most areas of life, people are constantly asked to give of themselves to others. The goal of this presentation is to help participants find new ways to balance those demands in all areas of their work and home lives.

The State Risk Management Conference is a great opportunity for all state employees from agency senior managers to health-care personnel with an interest in risk management to attend and learn about current risk management topics. The conference features 20 breakout sessions that will cover a multitude of topics. The conference provides an environment for sharing ideas and networking with people from across the state that handle similar situations as you do.

More information can be found at <http://www.doa.wi.gov/riskconference>. Please contact Jennifer Rhude with questions at 608-267-2731 or Jennifer.rhude@wisconsin.gov.

SAFETY TRAINING FOR SUPERVISORS

Supervisory knowledge of on-the-job safety is a critical component in keeping State employees injury free in the workplace. The top causes of our employee injuries are well known (see earlier article). What may not be as well known is the safety training offered to supervisors in the State of Wisconsin by the Bureau of State Risk Management. Whether you supervise office workers, electrical workers, mail room workers or employees in any job function, you should attend supervisory safety training.

Safety professionals from across the state created the safety training program to help our supervisors and managers reduce employee work injuries, time-off from work due to injuries and worker's compensation costs. The Bureau of State Risk Management strongly encourages you to make employee safety your responsibility by attending the sessions most applicable to your supervisory functional area.

To access the training curriculum and schedule, please go online to www.doa.state.wi.us/training/courselist.asp?famid=13&locid=2 or contact Jim Nelson at 608-267-2729.



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