

For immediate release
News from the University of Southern Indiana

Awareness and cleanliness are key to MRSA control

University of Southern Indiana officials are taking an aggressive approach to educating and warning students and staff about the risk of community-associated methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (CA-MRSA), a type of bacteria which has been the focus of national attention recently because of outbreaks in Virginia and across the country.

Efforts have been stepped up to regularly clean and disinfect areas of campus where CA-MRSA is most likely to be transmitted, such as weight rooms, showers, and common areas of residence halls.

DavidENZler, director of Recreation, Fitness, and Wellness at USI, leads the effort to inform students, faculty in physical education, workers in Recreation and Fitness, and athletic staff members about the importance of good hygiene. He and his staff created and distributed posters that urge students and student athletes to disinfect equipment in the weight room after each use.

Fresh towels and spray bottles with a new EPA-registered disinfectant are supplied to instructors, group exercise classes, and patrons throughout the Recreation Fitness Center and the Physical Activities Center (PAC).ENZler said he has seen a substantial number of students heeding the warning and wiping down equipment after use.

Brian Zolner, head athletic trainer, said antibacterial soap dispensers have been installed in showers to replace bar soap. He encourages athletes to shower after practices and wash and dry laundry at hot settings. No dirty laundry is left in locker rooms and Zolner asks student athletes to take precautionary steps for treating open wounds.

ENZler has placed MRSA information on bulletin boards in the Recreation and Fitness Center and has information available for persons who want printed material.

Area coordinators and resident assistants are passing along MRSA information to residents in housing. And Bryan Morrison, manager of Environmental Health and Safety, is preparing to conduct staff seminars on the topic.

According to the United States Centers for Disease Control, MRSA is a type of bacteria that is resistant to certain antibiotics such as methicillin and other more common antibiotics such as penicillin and amoxicillin. When left untreated, the bacteria can cause serious health problems.

MRSA infections occur most frequently among persons in hospitals and healthcare facilities (like nursing homes and dialysis centers) who have weakened immune systems.

MRSA infections that occur in otherwise healthy people who have not been recently hospitalized or had a medical procedure are known as **community-associated** infections. These infections are usually skin infections, such as abscesses, boils, and other lesions. CA-MRSA spreads by skin to skin contact and the sharing of personal items.

Good hygiene practice, as listed here, is the best way to protect against such infections:

- wash hands with soap and water
- shower after workouts
- cover open wounds with a clean, dry bandage
- avoid sharing personal items such as towels, bars of soap, cups, athletic gear, and wipe surfaces of fitness equipment before and after use.