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MRSA Superbug Prevention Tips

Personal Hygiene, Frequent Hand-washing Encouraged

October 23, 2007 – Henderson County, NC: With the MRSA Superbug recently in the news, Linda Weldon, Henderson County Department of Public Health's Communicable Disease Nurse Supervisor, encourages preventive measures be taken in Henderson County.

"Few states track the number of MRSA cases. That's because the disease is a fairly common infection. States also don't track numbers of other common infections like the flu," Weldon said. "Rather than focusing on numbers, the focus should be on looking for, and treating, MRSA symptoms; and on personal hygiene – like hand washing – that can reduce spread of the disease."

Staphylococcus aureus, often called "staph," is a common type of bacteria that can be found in the nose, under the fingernails or on the skin of about one out of every three people, with no ill effects. Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, also called MRSA, are staph that are not killed by many of the antibiotics doctors used to prescribe most commonly for staph infections, such as penicillin.

"Many people carry MRSA on their skin, and most will never get sick from it," Weldon said. Skin infections occur when the bacteria get in through small scrapes or cuts, sometimes too small to notice. The infected area usually resembles a red bump, pimple or insect bite. If untreated, the lesion may become hard or drain pus.

"Anyone with these symptoms should see a health care provider immediately," Weldon said. The healthcare provider can determine appropriate treatment which may include several different types of antibiotics.

"It is important to note that MRSA is spread through direct contact with the infected skin, not by an infected person's cough or sneeze," Weldon added. "It is not a respiratory illness."

"The most important thing you can do to reduce the spread of MRSA and a lot of other infections like the flu and common cold is to wash your hands thoroughly and often," Weldon said. "They should be washed with warm soapy water for a minimum of 15 seconds and if soap isn't available, you can use alcohol-based hand sanitizers."

"We ask parents to reinforce to their children not to share personal items at school such as razors, towels, and to wash hands and shower after any athletic activity where wiping off sweat."

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For More Information visit the state epidemiology website on MRSA:
http://www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/gcdc/ca_mrsa/ca_mrsa.html