

# *Controlling MRSA*

Because of the recent media attention given to Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), Y-USA has posted information to assist YMCAs with media and/or member questions on the topic. The Y-USA Medical Advisory Committee (MAC) has issued a statement on the subject and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has additional information at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

The CDC reports that in outbreaks of MRSA, the environment has not played a significant role in the infection's transmission. MRSA is transmitted most frequently by direct skin-to-skin contact. The CDC suggests that individuals protect themselves from infections by practicing good hygiene (e.g., keeping hands clean by washing with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand rub and showering after working out); covering any open skin area such as abrasions or cuts with a clean dry bandage; avoiding sharing personal items such as towels or razors; using a barrier (e.g., clothing or a towel) between skin and shared equipment; and wiping surfaces of equipment before and after use.

An analysis of the information available from the MAC and the CDC would suggest a number of strategies that Ys can employ to both prevent infection and educate members and staff. Education can include sharing the CDC's report that "environment has not played a significant role in the transmission of MRSA. MRSA is transmitted most frequently by direct skin-to-skin contact." Good hygiene can be encouraged by posting "wash your hands" signs and perhaps installing hand sanitizer dispensers in various areas (good idea for a number of reasons). Ys should also enforce a policy of all users having open wounds properly covered in any area of the facility. The CDC also has a number of educational and awareness-raising posters available at their Web site.

Additional practices to consider are ensuring that fitness area towels are not reused by various participants, using disposable wipes for cleaning equipment between uses and disinfecting all equipment each evening.

YMCAs should consider the implications of how they decide to deal with this issue. By being proactive and developing consistent policies and practices that are communicate info to staff and volunteers; Ys will be well positioned should questions or an incident occur.

More information is available under the "What's Hot" section of YMCAexchange, from your local health department and from the CDC.