

Management Options for Recurrent Staph Skin Infections

©Division of Infectious Diseases

Children's National Health System

Washington, DC

“Staph” is a form of bacteria (technical name *Staphylococcus aureus*) that is normally found on our skin. Sometimes though, it can cause recurrent skin infections, such as boils. When that keeps happening, we can recommend some measures to try to keep the amount of Staph on the skin, groin area, and nasal passages as low as possible, which we hope will help prevent these infections from coming back.

Be aware that we can't expect, in most cases, to completely eliminate any recurrences of skin infections. We hope that these steps will decrease the number of times it happens.

- 1) General measures, such as **frequent hand washing with soap**, are probably most important to prevent spread of any infection among family members. This is good practice for everyone in the household.
- 2) **Bleach baths twice per week**: Use 1 teaspoon of common household bleach per gallon of water. The average bathtub, half full, is about 20 gallons, but it might help the first time you do this to fill your bathtub to its usual level with a gallon milk jug, keeping track of how many gallons it takes to reach the level you want. Add 1 teaspoon of bleach per gallon, and remember how many teaspoons you used. Then, for the next times you just fill the tub to the same level with water and put in that same amount of bleach.
- 3) Soak in this for 15 minutes, twice per week, on a regular basis (not just when you have a boil). Teenagers and adults who shower rather than bathe can use liquid soap that contains **chlorhexidine** (check the product label). PhisoHex is one of the brand names.
- 4) Cut nails as short as possible. Scratching bug bites can introduce Staph and other bacteria under the skin, causing infection.
- 5) Wash all linens (towels, sheets, personal items) at least once per week in hot water **with bleach**.
- 6) Do not share towels, sheets or personal items between household members.
- 7) Sometimes we may prescribe an antibacterial ointment called **mupirocin** to apply to the inside of both sides of your nose twice per day for 5 days each month. This medicine requires a prescription that your doctor can provide.
- 8) We sometimes treat all household members, even if they haven't had boils, at the same time to avoid passing the Staph bacteria back and forth to the rest of the family.