

Using NewsHour Extra Feature Stories

STORY

Schools Clean Up to Fight Deadly "Superbug", 10/22/07

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/july-dec07/staph_10-22.html

Estimated Time: One 45-minute class period with possible extension

[Student Worksheet](#) (reading comprehension and discussion questions without answers)

PROCEDURE

1. WARM UP

Use initiating questions to introduce the topic and find out how much your students know.

2. MAIN ACTIVITY

Have students read NewsHour Extra's feature story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions on the student handout.

3. DISCUSSION

Use discussion questions to encourage students to think about how the issues outlined in the story affect their lives and express and debate different opinions.

INITIATING QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the different ways diseases spread?

2. What does it mean when a disease is drug resistant?

3. Are there any diseases or health problems you know of that spread easily in school?

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – [Student Worksheet](#)

1. What is MRSA?

ANSWER

In recent weeks, several high schools in the northeastern United States have reported outbreaks of methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA, a bacteria known as a "superbug" because of its resistance to antibiotics.

2. How does MRSA spread?

ANSWER

The MRSA bacteria spreads on contaminated surfaces such as exercise equipment, school showers and locker rooms.

3. What happens once the bacteria gets inside skin?

ANSWER

If it gets into skin through a cut, it causes red, swollen and painful blisters that ooze pus or other fluid drainage. But the drug-resistant bacteria is harder to treat if it gets inside the body, spreading to the blood and internal organs.

4. How does bacteria get drug resistant?

ANSWER

Researchers say the drug-resistant form of the bacteria is the result of doctors over-prescribing antibiotic medications for common colds and ear infections.

Too many antibiotics in the environment favor bacteria that mutate and become resistant to common antibiotic treatments.

5. What age group is most vulnerable to MRSA?

ANSWER

Health officials stress that most of the deaths occur in nursing homes and hospitals and that it is rare for a healthy person to develop life-threatening blood or organ MRSA infections.

6. What are teachers and coaches doing to prevent infections in schools?

ANSWER

Students, teachers and coaches in areas with reported incidents are taking precautions to clean exercise equipment, locker rooms and other school facilities.

7. What are the main ways bacteria is spread, according to the CDC?

ANSWER

The primary ways in which the bacteria spread are called the 5 C's: crowding, frequent skin-to-skin contact, compromised skin (cuts or abrasions), contaminated items and lack of cleanliness.

8. How can students protect themselves?

ANSWER

People can protect against the bacteria by washing their hands and showering after exercising, covering any wounds, not sharing personal items like towels and cleaning surfaces that people touch often.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

1. Are you concerned about MRSA at your school? Do you think your school is cleaned regularly and set up in a way that would protect from infection?

2. If you were a coach at a school with MRSA infections, how would you react and what actions would you take?

3. Research the topic of antibiotic resistance. What are some other diseases that are difficult to treat because of resistance? How is the medical community trying to combat this problem?

Extension Activity

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra (extra@newshour.org). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.