

## 'Superbug' Close to Home

Written by

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An antibiotic-resistant staph infection has reached western North Carolina.

Friday, Buncombe County students left with a note, warning parents about the "superbug." There have been three confirmed cases in the district, and could be more, school officials say. It's the same illness that's blamed for the death of a Virginia high school student last week. While it does not respond to penicillin and the usual antibiotics, it can be treated with other drugs. The "superbug," also called MRSA, is spread by skin-to-skin contact or by sharing an item used by an infected person. It is not an airborne disease. While two of Buncombe's confirmed cases have been cleared to return to school, the condition of a middle schooler is still unknown.

Health officials say hygiene is a must when trying to prevent the infection. Always wash your hands, they say. When using soap, lather in warm water for fifteen seconds. Hand sanitizer may be the best way to prevent staph infections, some doctors say. Do not share items like towels or razors, and always wipe down exercise equipment before use.

The "superbug" has frequented hospitals and other medical facilities, but is gaining even more notoriety with recent outbreaks in schools.

Over the weekend, ten students at Elizabeth City State were confirmed to be infected with the bacteria.