

MRSA in Wilkes

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Five cases of antibiotic-resistant staph infections have been confirmed in Wilkes County Schools.

The district has yet to disclose which county schools the students attend, but school officials promise precautions have already been taken against the bacteria, including sanitizing all surfaces.

Just yesterday State Health Director Leah Devlin said the bacteria, called MRSA (MER-SA) by health professionals, does not pose any special threat to North Carolina. Devlin said the flu kills twice as many people nationwide each year.

According to Watauga County Communicable Disease Immunization Nurse Sandy Hagler, MRSA is nothing new.

In fact, the bacterium is found naturally on most people's skin.

When the bacterium gets in a cut, however, it can be difficult to treat.

While there are no confirmed cases of MRSA in Watauga County, there have been in the past, mainly in medical facilities, she says.

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People are panicking because of the recent outbreaks in schools and other community areas, she says.

There are ways to prevent MRSA.

Don't share things like towels, razors and bandages.

Wash your hands. Use hand sanitizer or lather for fifteen minutes in warm water.

Keep an eye out for draining wounds. If you have a cut, keep it bandaged, she says, and, if it looks infected, see a doctor.