



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
Office of Communications**



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Los Angeles County Public Health Officials Investigating Staph Infections among County Jail Inmates

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County Department of Health Services has been working with the Sheriff's Department investigating and controlling an outbreak of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) skin infections in inmates at the Sheriff's detention facilities (jails). Acute Communicable Disease Control staff were contacted by the Sheriff's Department regarding an increase in MRSA last summer; a subsequent review of all skin infections cases identified 928 inmates with the infection in 2002.

"Our staff have been working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the California Department of Health Services in developing surveillance, treatment and control guidelines for MRSA at the Sheriff's facilities," said Jonathan Fielding, M.D. M.P.H. "We are working with the Sheriff's Department to review policies and procedures on laundry, showers, environmental cleaning and skin care."

A study of cases in 2002 indicate that nine percent of the inmates had a MRSA culture within five days of booking suggesting that the inmate had the infection before entering the jail. Within the first eight months, 57 persons were reported hospitalized with the infection. Recent test results show that most MRSA isolates from the jails were a single type that had been seen in recent community outbreaks in the county. These included an ongoing investigation of MRSA among HIV positive men who have sex with men (MSM), an outbreak in an athletic team and a newborn nursery. The CDC will examine samples (isolates) from each of these outbreaks to determine if they are related to outbreaks of MRSA elsewhere in the nation.

Background

Staphylococcus aureus is a ubiquitous skin organism (approximately 30 – 50% of people carry it) and MRSA is a strain which has developed resistance to a number of families of antibiotics. It is often associated with outbreaks in hospitals and other healthcare settings (nosocomial). There have been increasing reports of MRSA skin infections outside of hospitals with distinct genotypes and resistance patterns, which may signify increased community transmission of MRSA.

Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control and community and family health. Public Health comprises more than 3,800 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$465 million.