



NIAGARA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Dear Colleagues:

The purpose of this alert is to update you and request your cooperation with an ongoing investigation of skin infections following tattooing.

The Niagara County Health Department (NCHD) together with the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) is investigating a cluster of eight cases of skin infections associated with a single tattoo artist. Three of the eight infections have been confirmed as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA). The artist is known to perform tattoos at his private residence, and he will travel to a client's home. The first onset of skin infections was October 22, 2007 and the most recent was February 18, 2008.

The Niagara County Health Department is requesting area providers:

- Culture any skin infections associated with a tattoo.
- Obtain information regarding the tattoo artist, including name and location where the tattooing took place.
- Report the case immediately to the Niagara County Health Department at 439-7456.

We request that every effort be made to culture all skin lesions associated with a tattoo, by direct swabbing after incision and drainage, needle aspiration, or whatever method is clinically appropriate. Obtaining clinical specimens is an important public health component to the heightened surveillance involving this tattoo artist. Because MRSA continues to emerge in our communities, a culture is recommended so appropriate antibiotic therapy can be prescribed, if needed.

Thank you for your help in this matter.

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Stapleton
Public Health Director