



**Sheila Dixon**

*Mayor,*  
Baltimore

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## **Mayor Dixon Joins Health Department to Release New Data on MRSA Infections**

Baltimore, MD (January 26, 2009) – Mayor Sheila Dixon was joined by Senator Lisa Gladden and Baltimore City Health Commissioner Dr. Joshua Sharfstein to release two new analyses of data relating to invasive infections with Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus, known commonly as MRSA. These studies show a serious problem with MRSA in Baltimore and indicate that efforts to address MRSA infection in dialysis centers, long-term care facilities, and HIV clinics may prove beneficial.

“I thank the Straus Foundation, RAND Corporation, and Health Department for providing this important data,” said Mayor Sheila Dixon. “The key is now to use this information to improve health in the city.”

The first study was conducted by the RAND Corporation at the request of the Aaron and Lillie Straus Foundation. The study reviews hospitalizations of city residents with cellulitis, a skin infection frequently linked to MRSA. The study finds that from 2000 to 2006, the number of inpatient hospitalizations with cellulitis among city residents increased by 74% from 1,456 hospitalizations to 2,539. Infection rates increased among city residents of all ages and insurance statuses. The rate of hospitalization with cellulitis is twice as high in Baltimore as it is in the District of Columbia and the state of Maryland as a whole.

The second report is a Health Department analysis of data on invasive MRSA infections collected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. These infections include not only cellulitis, but also other serious infections such as bloodstream infections and pneumonia. This report finds that overall, the rate of MRSA infection has declined in Baltimore about 10% from 2004 to 2007. The decline was particularly significant for cases associated with recent surgery, having an invasive medical device, and intravenous drug use.

However, there was a more modest decline in invasive MRSA infections associated with dialysis, HIV, and long-term care facilities.

“These data shed important light on the MRSA problem in Baltimore,” said Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Commissioner of Health. “We must work with key healthcare institutions and providers to address this important threat.”

City residents can best protect themselves from MRSA infections by regularly washing their hands, keeping skin healthy and intact to avoid staph from entering the body and seeking early medical attention for skin infections that do not heal.

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