

Further Recommendations for MRSA prevention among athletes

- ◇ Wear protective clothing or gear designed to prevent skin abrasions or cuts
- ◇ Use a barrier (such as clothing or a towel) between your skin and shared equipment like weight-training, sauna, and steam-room benches and disinfect equipment after each use
- ◇ Practice good hygiene by showering immediately after practice and games
- ◇ Avoid contact with open wounds or bandaged skin
- ◇ Do not share towels or other personal items such as bar soap, clothing or Razors
- ◇ Wash hands frequently– especially for sports using shared equipment
- ◇ Check skin regularly for any swollen, red or blistered areas
- ◇ Advise a coach if you think you may have a skin infection and seek the advice of a healthcare professional.

Wash your hands!



Relatively simple measures can prevent skin infections from being passed between athletes. The most important measure is frequent hand washing and showering after practices or meets. Seek medical attention promptly for new skin problems so that infections can be caught and treated early.

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Skin Infections in Athletes

A guide to prevention



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Preventing MRSA and other skin infections:

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus



What is *Staphylococcus aureus*?

Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to simply as “staph” are bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of 25-30% of healthy people. Staph bacteria are among the most common causes of skin infections in the United States. Most can be treated without antibiotics, however staph bacteria may also cause serious infections such as surgical wound infection, bloodstream infections and pneumonia.

What is MRSA?

Some staph bacteria are resistant to antibiotics. MRSA is a type of staph that is resistant to methicillin and other commonly prescribed antibiotics such as penicillin, oxacillin and amoxicillin.

How is MRSA Spread?

Like other causes of skin infections in athletes, MRSA is usually spread from person to person through direct skin contact or contact with shared items or surfaces (e.g., towels, used band-aids, weight-training equipment surfaces) that have touched a person’s infection.

MRSA might spread more easily among athletes because they:

- ◇ Have repeated skin-to-skin contact
- ◇ Get breaks in the skin such as cuts and abrasions that if left uncovered, allow staph and MRSA to enter and cause infection
- ◇ Come into contact with bacteria during usual sports activities
- ◇ May share equipment or surfaces that come into direct contact with skin



What does a MRSA infection look like?



A red, swollen area with an abscess or draining pus is often one of the first signs and symptoms of MRSA infection. The infection site may be mistaken for a spider or other insect bite. Preexisting wound sites or broken skin may be at risk for infection if the area is not kept dry and properly treated.

How can athletes prevent a MRSA infection?

The best way to prevent a MRSA infection is by practicing good personal hygiene.

- ◇ Shower on site immediately after every practice and game. Use soap and warm water. Do not share personal hygiene items, clothing or towels
- ◇ Disinfect all shared equipment after use with a commercial disinfectant or bleach solution to kill bacteria
- ◇ Cover possible infections with clean, dry bandages until you can be seen by a healthcare professional