



MRSA Overview

The following important information about MRSA infection among student athletes was obtained by the Center for Disease Control and reflects the procedures followed by Fort Wayne Community Schools. Student athletes and their families should review this information carefully.

What is Staphylococcus aureus and MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus, often called "staph" is a type of bacteria commonly found on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Approximately 30% of people have staph in their noses and do not have any symptoms. MRSA which stands for **Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*** is staph that is resistant to commonly used antibiotics such as penicillin and currently available cephalosporin. In the past, MRSA was found only in healthcare facilities and caused infection in people who were sick. More recently, MRSA has emerged in the community and can cause infections in otherwise healthy people.

What types of infections does MRSA cause?

In the community, most MRSA infections are minor skin infections that may appear as sores or boils that often are red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. These skin infections commonly occur either at sites of breaks in the skin such as cuts and abrasions, and areas of the body covered by hair (for example, the back of the neck, groin, buttock, armpit, or beard area of men).

Almost all MRSA skin infections can effectively be treated in the outpatient setting by drainage of the pus by a healthcare provider with or without antibiotics. More serious infections such as pneumonia, blood or bone infections are rare in healthy people who get MRSA skin infections

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 bandages, 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
- share items and surfaces that come into direct skin contact
- have difficulty staying clean

Which athletes are most at-risk for MRSA skin infections?

Skin infections including MRSA have been reported mostly in high-physical-contact sports such as wrestling, football, and rugby. However, MRSA infections have been reported among athletes in other sports such as soccer, basketball, field hockey, volleyball, rowing, martial arts, fencing, and baseball.

Even though little physical contact occurs in some sports during participation, skin contact or activities that may lead to spread of MRSA skin infections may take place before or after participation such as in the locker room. Therefore, anyone participating in organized or recreational sports should be aware of the signs of possible skin infections and follow prevention measures.

Advice for Athletes and Parents

How do I protect myself from getting MRSA and other skin infections?

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- Keep your hands clean by washing frequently with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand rub.
 - At a minimum, hands should be cleaned before and after playing sports and activities such as using shared weight-training equipment, when caring for wounds including changing bandages, and after using the toilet.
 - Both plain and antimicrobial soap are effective for hand washing, but liquid soap is preferred over bar soap in these settings to limit sharing.
 - If hands are not visibly dirty and sinks are not available for hand washing, for example, while on the field of play or in the weight-room, alcohol-based hand rubs and sanitizers can be used. Alcohol-based hand rubs with at least 60% alcohol content are preferred.
- Shower immediately after exercise. Do not share bar soap and towels.
- Wash your uniform and clothing after each use. Follow the clothing label's instructions for washing and drying. Drying clothes completely in a dryer is preferred.

Take care of your skin

- Wear protective clothing or gear designed to prevent skin abrasions or cuts.
- Cover skin abrasions and cuts with clean dry bandages or other dressings recommended by your team's healthcare provider (e.g., athletic trainer, team doctor) until healed.
 - Follow your healthcare provider's instructions for when and how often to change your bandages and dressings.

Do not share items that come into contact with your skin

- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels and razors that contact your bare skin.
- Do not share ointments that are applied by placing your hands into an open-container.
- Use a barrier (such as clothing or a towel) between your skin and shared equipment like weight-training, sauna and steam-room benches.

What should I do if I think I have an MRSA infection?

- Tell your parent, coach, athletic trainer, school nurse, team doctor or other healthcare provider if you think you have an infection so it can be treated quickly. Finding infections early and getting care will reduce the amount of playing time lost and decrease the chance that the infection will become severe.
 - Pay attention for signs of infections such as redness, warmth, swelling, pus, and pain at sites where your skin has sores, abrasions, or cuts. Sometimes these infections can be confused with spider bites.
 - Infections can also occur at sites covered by body hair or where uniforms or equipment cause skin irritation or increased rubbing.
- Do not try to treat the infection yourself by picking or popping the sore.
- Cover possible infections with clean dry bandages until you can be seen by a healthcare provider (e.g., doctor, nurse, athletic trainer).

Have an MRSA skin infection. How do I prevent spreading it to others?

- Get medical care for your infection. Do not try to treat it yourself.
- Cover your wounds. Keep wounds covered with clean, dry bandages until healed. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions on proper care of the wound. Pus from infected wounds can contain staph and MRSA, so keeping the infection covered will help prevent the spread to others. Bandages and tape can be thrown away with the regular trash.
- Clean your hands often. You, your family, and others in close contact should wash their hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub, especially after changing the bandage or touching the infected wound.
- Do not share personal items. Personal items include towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, and uniforms. Wash used sheets, towels, and clothes with water and laundry detergent. Use a dryer to dry clothes completely.