

## PREVENTING MRSA INFECTIONS

Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus, also known as MRSA, is getting wide national coverage in the news as of late. MRSA is a form of Staphylococcus (staph) infection which has developed resistance to treatment with basic antibiotics such as methicillin and other common antibiotics such as penicillin, amoxicillin and oxacillin.

The skin serves as the major barrier to protect us from infections. When that barrier breaks down, as in cuts or abrasions (or even pimples), we are subject to a number of viruses, bacteria (including MRSA), and fungi. People with weak immune systems have a greater risk for infection than the general public. These skin infections can be rapidly transmitted by teammates and opponents via the use of shared equipment and mats or skin-to-skin contact and locker room benches and tables. Students who participate in wrestling, gymnastics, and swimming are susceptible to skin infections and should be particularly vigilant with proper hygiene and wound treatment.

The signs and symptoms of skin infections include:

- Marks on the skin that look like pimples or a spider bite
- It may only be one spot or it may start to spread to the surrounding area
- Contact your health professional immediately upon recognizing any signs and symptoms to prevent spreading

Below are some tips of what YOU can do to protect yourself and your students from MRSA:

1. **ADVISE STUDENTS/ATHLETES NOT TO SHARE CLOTHING / EQUIPMENT.** Keep personal items personal, spread of MRSA is commonly through direct contact.
2. **IF YOU SEE A STUDENT/ATHLETE WITH A WOUND (SCRAPE, CUT, BURN) – TELL THEM TO GET IT COVERED UP.** Any drainage from a wound can spread the infection.

3. **TRAINERS, COACHES AND STUDENTS/ATHLETES SHOULD WASH THEIR HANDS OFTEN.** It is very important for coaches to encourage your students to follow proper hygiene habits. If facilities for hand washing are not conveniently located, hand sanitizers are also an effective alternative.
4. **IF A CUT LOOKS INFECTED, GET IT TREATED.** Once you or your student receives medical care, ask the physician to test for MRSA. Once again, MRSA often goes undetected.
5. **SHOWER WITH SOAP & WATER AFTER PLAYING SPORTS.** Be sure students use a clean towel and shower shoes.

Please don't hesitate to contact the athletic trainer, nurse, or team doctor at your school should you have any further questions or concerns. Recognizing these infections is imperative in slowing their spread and protecting your students and your season. Remember, WE ALL can take an active role in preventing MRSA transmission from student to student.

For more information on this article or for priority appointments for sports injuries please contact Henry Ford Center for Athletic Medicine at 313 972-4216.

**Henry Ford Health System's Center for Athletic Medicine** offers a comprehensive approach to sports medicine, including surgical and non-surgical care, sports rehabilitation, injury prevention, and performance enhancement programs. The HFHS treatment team includes sports medicine fellowship trained orthopedic surgeons, sports medicine fellowship trained primary care physicians, as well as certified athletic trainers and physical therapists. These health care professionals are supported by the HFHS nationally recognized bone and joint research facility, including the prestigious Herrick Davis Motion Analysis Lab. HFHS is proud to be health care providers to the Detroit area's premier sports programs including professional, collegiate, and high school athletes. ■