

MRSA Awareness

in Athletic Organizations and Schools



What is MRSA?

MRSA is the acronym for Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus Bacteria. MRSA is a strain of the common Staphylococcus aureus bacteria that has mutated and become unable to be killed by commonly used antibiotics.

Previously it was found almost exclusively in hospitals, but now is a rapidly growing problem in our communities (known as CA-MRSA, or Community Acquired MRSA). It is estimated that Staphylococcus aureus bacteria are carried by 30-50% of the population, and is very easily passed from one person to another. This is especially troublesome in contact sports and school playgrounds.

Why is Awareness Important?

Coaches, players, parents and school administrators all need to be aware of the presence of CA-MRSA bacteria in our communities because it is so easily spread from person to person.



Who is at Risk?

Anyone who is in physical contact with other people on a regular basis is at a high risk for acquiring CA-MRSA and other potentially dangerous bacterial infections, as it is estimated that 30-50% of the population carries the bacteria on their bodies every day. Athletic facilities provide the ideal environment for bacteria to thrive, as they are warm and humid. Athletes also become more susceptible as their immune system temporarily lowers after a hard workout.

What can MRSA do to me?

MRSA (and Staphylococcus aureus) infection can present itself in forms ranging from skin infections (boils, furuncles, cellulitis, ingrown hairs) to potentially fatal osteomyelitis (bone infection), abscesses and vegetative growths on the internal organs to septicemia (bacterial blood poisoning) and toxic shock syndrome (TSS). Recent studies have suggested that over 50% of all skin infections seen by doctors in some areas of the U.S. are MRSA infections. Often, MRSA is initially diagnosed as a spider bite.

How do I avoid MRSA?

Personal hygiene is key in the prevention of MRSA and Staphylococcus aureus.

- Thorough cleansing after workouts and contact with other players is your primary defense.
- Utilize alcohol-based hand sanitizers during workouts and games.
- Launder your uniforms and other athletic clothing in hot water and dry them with a hot dryer.
- Any athletic equipment must be thoroughly sanitized after use to avoid transmission of bacteria, as MRSA can live for days on surfaces. There are companies now that perform this service so you can be assured that you are cleaning your equipment thoroughly without compromising its integrity. Don't forget your gym equipment, as it can become a breeding ground for bacteria as well.
- If you have an open wound, be sure to clean it well, and keep it covered with a bandage that attaches to the skin on all sides.
- Do not ever share or borrow towels, razors, soap, or any other personal items.

What are the symptoms of MRSA?

- Boils, rashes, or ingrown hairs - often occurring in the area of the armpits, groin, neck, and buttocks where Staphylococcus bacteria colonize and thrive.
- Unexplained fever, muscular pain and/or fatigue, especially in the several months following a skin infection.

MRSA Checklist

IDENTIFICATION

- Are lesions appearing as possible spider bites, inflamed ingrown hairs, cellulites, impetigo, etc being ruled out for MRSA infections?
- Has wound been cultured to rule-out MRSA?
- Are any suspected infections being treated topically? Circle edges of inflammation to document progression.
 - Assess vital signs daily. If red inflamed area continues to grow, alert attending physician immediately.

PREVENTION

- Does your facility have a Hand Hygiene protocol?
- Does the protocol include washing hands first thing in the morning, immediately before lunch and last wash of the day with an antimicrobial that has residual killing action?
- Does the protocol include washing with an antimicrobial soap that has residual killing action any time hands are visibly soiled or sticky?
- Do you wash infected areas of skin with an antimicrobial soap that has residual kill?
- Do you clean all surfaces with an antimicrobial cleaner proven to kill MRSA?
- Does your facility prohibit individuals with draining wounds from soaking in hot or cold tubs?

INFECTION CONTROL and PATIENT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- Has a medical professional been consulted when MRSA is suspected?
- Has wound been cultured to determine antibiotic susceptibility?
- Does your facility use a topical antimicrobial proven to kill MRSA for treating superficial skin infections?
- Have contact precautions been put into place - gowns, gloves, masks?
- Have infected individuals been isolated in private rooms or cohorted (grouped together)?
- Are infected individuals isolated from contact with common surfaces and equipment?
- Is inflamed area circled on the skin and assessed daily?
- Are vital signs of patients with skin infections tracked daily?
- Are all draining wounds covered?
- If medically indicated, has incision & drainage of the lesion been performed?
- Have the mop head and other cleaning materials been discarded after each use in all areas with patients who have or are suspected of having MRSA infections?
- Have all fabrics been washed and dried on HOT (ideally 140 degrees) - whenever possible?
- Have drying times been extended to insure all fabrics are COMPLETELY DRY before removing from the dryer?



MRSA Do's and Don'ts

DO:

- Wash hands at least 3 times per day or whenever they are visibly soiled to help prevent cross-contamination.
- Shower immediately after activity in water as hot as can be comfortably tolerated using an antimicrobial cleaner.
- Advise people you come into close contact with to wash their hands with a liquid antimicrobial cleanser.
- Keep wounds and lesions covered with clean, dry bandages. This is especially important when drainage is present.
- Disinfect all towels, sheets, and surfaces that come into contact with the wound with a solution of 1:100 of household bleach to water.
- Wash and dry clothes, linens and towels on the HOT setting if possible. If not possible, make sure all fabrics are COMPLETELY dry before removing from the dryer.
- Avoid participating in contact sports or other skin-to-skin contact until the infection has healed.
- Use a skin antiseptic to treat MRSA on the skin, in combination with antibiotics as prescribed by your doctor/medical staff.
- Wash hands and forearms above the elbow before and after activity where contamination is likely.

DO NOT:

- Get in a whirlpool or common tub.
- Share bars of soap, razors, towels, or athletic gear.
- Wait to see if it gets better on its own.
- Contact infected area with any surface that is shared by others.