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## MRSA Information for Coaches and Athletes

An increasing number of outbreaks of skin infections among sports teams caused by *Staphylococcus aureus* (Staph) bacteria that are resistant to many antibiotics have been reported in New Hampshire. These resistant strains of Staph are known as MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*). Some, but not all Staph bacteria are resistant strains (MRSA).

### **What is a MRSA skin infection?**

Resistant strains of *Staphylococcus aureus* (Staph) bacteria (MRSA) are often found in the noses and on the skin of people. Most of the time MRSA carried in the nose or on the skin does not cause infection, and when it does, it usually causes minor infections, such as boils or abscesses. However, sometimes MRSA can cause more serious infections such as pneumonia, joint, and bloodstream infections. MRSA infections often begin when MRSA bacteria enter the body through an injury to the skin. Symptoms of a MRSA skin infection include redness, warmth, swelling, tenderness of the skin, and boils or blisters.

### **How do MRSA skin infections spread?**

MRSA can rub off the skin of an infected person and onto the skin of another person when they have rigorous skin-to-skin contact. MRSA from an infected person can also get onto a commonly shared item or surface and then get onto the skin of a the person who touches it next. Examples of commonly

shared items include towels, razors, and athletic equipment.

### **What can be done to prevent infection among athletes?**

Athletes should clean their hands and skin often. They should avoid skin-to-skin contact with anyone suspected of having a MRSA skin infection. Athletes should not share personal items (e.g., razors, towels, etc.) with other persons and should keep towels and clothes clean. Items that are shared with other people (e.g., towels, razors, athletic equipment) should be cleaned before reuse by another person.

### **What should I do if I think an athlete has a skin infection?**

If you suspect that an athlete might have a MRSA skin infection, have them consult their healthcare provider as soon as possible. Early treatment can help prevent the infection from getting worse. The athlete should be sure to follow all the directions the healthcare provider gives, including taking all of the doses of any prescribed antibiotic.

### **If an athlete is diagnosed with a MRSA skin infection what should be done?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have developed the following recommendations for controlling MRSA outbreaks among sports teams:

- Cover all wounds. If a wound cannot be covered adequately, consider excluding players with potentially infectious skin

lesions from practice or competitions until the lesions are healed or can be covered adequately.

- Encourage good hygiene, including showering and washing with soap after all practices and competitions.
- Ensure availability of adequate soap and hot water.
- Discourage sharing of towels and personal items (e.g., clothing or equipment).
- Establish a routine cleaning schedule for all shared equipment.
- Train athletes and coaches in first aid for wounds and recognition of wounds that are possibly infected.
- Encourage athletes to report skin lesions to coaches and encourage coaches to assess athletes regularly for skin lesions.
- Coaches report athletes with MRSA infections to the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Communicable Disease Control Section at 603-271-4496 or 800-852-3345 x4496.

**For questions about MRSA, call the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Communicable Disease Control Section at 603-271-4496 or 800-852-3345 x4496. For further information, refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services website at [www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov).**