

MRSA and Athletics

What is MRSA?

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a type of bacteria that is resistant to treatment with certain antibiotics. Most of the time, MRSA causes skin infections, but it can also lead to pneumonia and bloodstream infections. In the past, MRSA occurred in hospitals and nursing homes, but it is becoming more common in community settings such as schools and day care centers.

People can become infected with MRSA by touching infected people, or contaminated objects/surfaces. These bacteria can then enter the body through cuts, scrapes, or other openings in the skin.

What should student athletes know about MRSA?

“Staph” bacteria can be found on the skin of healthy people, but only a very small percentage is MRSA. Anyone can get MRSA. MRSA can spread easily among people who spend time in close contact with each other, such as household members and participants in close-contact sports (football, wrestling).

What are high-risk behaviors associated with MRSA?

Student athletes should not share personal care items such as razors, bar soap, cosmetics, or towels. Do not share clothes or uniforms that are not properly washed. Do not share athletic gear that has not been cleaned.

How can a student athletes protect themselves?

Personal hygiene is important. Washing hands frequently throughout the day, showering after playing sports or using gym equipment and washing clothes in hot water will help prevent the spread of MRSA skin infections. Consider wiping down gym/sports equipment and exercise mats before use. Keep skin that comes in contact with common areas covered to act as a barrier. If you have an opening in your skin, cover it with a bandage.

What should a student athlete do if he/she thinks has an MRSA infection?

Keep the sore covered with a bandage at all times. Do not share clothing, towels, or personal care items. Tell you school nurse, athletic trainer, or coach if you have a sore that won't heal. Contact your medical provider so dangerous complications can be avoided.

Please contact your coach, athletic trainer, or school nurse with any questions related to MRSA.