



"Handwashing is the single most important means of preventing the spread of infection."

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

A Health Communication Production of the
Mecklenburg County
Health Department

249 Billingsley Rd.
Charlotte, NC 28211
704-336-4700
www.meckhealth.org



MRSA Prevention In Athletic Settings



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Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)

Cases of MRSA continue to be identified in the community. MRSA is a type of infection caused by *Staph* bacteria that is resistant to some common antibiotics such as penicillin. While most cases have involved athletes, cases involving non-athletes have also occurred. Skin infections such as abscesses and boils are the most common form of this infection. The infected area usually starts out as a small bump resembling a pimple, which becomes redder and often develops pus drainage.

Staphylococcus bacteria (or *Staph*) are commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy individuals. *Staph* and MRSA are spread by close contact either through direct physical contact with an infected individual or by touching objects (e.g. towels, sheets, wound dressings, clothes, or sports equipment) contaminated with the bacteria.

In most cases, MRSA infections are mild and can be treated successfully with proper hygiene and the appropriate antibiotics. If left untreated, MRSA can progress to a life-threatening infection and become difficult to treat because there are fewer effective antibiotics available at this stage of the illness.

Here are a few guidelines to help prevent and control the spread of MRSA in the community:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water.
- Avoid sharing personal items (e.g., towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, or uniforms). An individual who becomes infected should wash all bed linens and clothes in hot water and laundry detergent frequently until the infection has cleared.
- Report any suspicious skin sore or boil to your healthcare provider (including the school nurse) immediately.



- If you participate in sports involving close personal contact (e.g. wrestling and football), shower with soap immediately after each practice, game, or match.
- Non-washable gear (i.e. head protectors), should be wiped down with alcohol after each use.
- Athletic equipment such as wrestling or gymnastics mats should be wiped down regularly with an antibacterial solution.
- Athletes should receive a total body check prior to any game, match, or tournament.
- Individuals with an infection involving drainage (i.e. pus drainage) should be excluded from participation in sporting events and practices until no pus drainage is present, the infected site can be adequately covered with a bandage and clothing, and a physician's release has been obtained.
- Any cut or break in the skin should be washed with soap and water and a clean dressing applied on a daily basis.

More information about Community Associated MRSA is available on the CDC's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/>