
Prevention Information and Advice for Athletes

What To Do if You Think You Have MRSA

- Tell your parent, coach, athletic trainer, school nurse, team doctor, or other healthcare provider if you think you have an infection so it can be treated quickly. Finding infections early and getting care will reduce the amount of playing time lost and decrease the chance that the infection will become severe.
 - Pay attention for signs of infections such as redness, warmth, swelling, pus, and pain at sites where your skin has sores, abrasions, or cuts. Sometimes these infections can be confused with spider bites.
 - Infections can also occur at sites covered by body hair or where uniforms or equipment cause skin irritation or increased rubbing.
- Do not try to treat the infection yourself by picking or popping the sore.
- Cover possible infections with clean, dry bandages until you can be seen by a healthcare provider (e.g., doctor, nurse, athletic trainer).

Prevention Steps for Athletes

Practice good personal hygiene

In addition to practicing good personal hygiene, athletes and visitors to athletic facilities should also do the following:

- Keep your hands clean by washing frequently with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand rub.
 - At a minimum, hands should be cleaned before and after playing sports and activities such as using shared weight-training equipment, when caring for wounds including changing bandages, and after using the toilet.
 - Both plain and antimicrobial soap are effective for hand washing, but liquid soap is preferred over bar soap in these settings to limit sharing.
 - If hands are not visibly dirty and sinks are not available for hand washing, for example, while on the field of play or in the weight-room, alcohol-based hand rubs and sanitizers can be used. Alcohol-based hand rubs with at least 60% alcohol content are preferred.
- Shower immediately after exercise and do not share bar soap or towels.
- Wash your uniform and clothing after each use. Follow the clothing label's instructions for washing and drying. Drying clothes completely in a dryer is preferred.

Take care of your skin

- Wear protective clothing or gear designed to prevent skin abrasions or cuts.
- Cover skin abrasions and cuts with clean dry bandages or other dressings recommended by your team's healthcare provider (e.g., athletic trainer, team doctor) until healed.

- Follow your healthcare provider's instructions for when and how often to change your bandages and dressings.

Do not share items that come into contact with your skin

- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels and razors that contact your bare skin.
- Do not share ointments that are applied by placing your hands into an open container.
- Use a barrier (such as clothing or a towel) between your skin and shared equipment like weight-training, sauna, and steam-room benches.

Take precautions with common surfaces and equipment

Although in most situations you will not know if a surface has been cleaned, it's important to remember that most surfaces do not pose a risk of spreading staph and MRSA.

If cleaning procedures are unknown, take the appropriate precautions such as:

- Using barriers like a towel or clothing between your skin and the surface.
- Showering immediately after activities where you have direct skin contact with people or shared surfaces such as after exercising at a health club.
- Cleaning your hands regularly.
- Keeping cuts and scrapes clean and covered with bandages or dressing until healed.

These precautions are especially important in settings such as in locker rooms, gyms, and health clubs.

[Top](#)

Why MRSA is Spread among Athletes

In athletes, MRSA might spread more easily because they:

- Have repeated skin-to-skin contact.
- Get breaks in the skin such as cuts and abrasions that if left uncovered allow MRSA to enter and cause infection.
- Share items and surfaces that come into direct skin contact.
- Have inadequate access to hygiene measures.

[Top](#)

How to Prevent Spreading MRSA If You Have MRSA

- Get medical care for your infection. Do not try to treat it yourself.
- Cover your wounds. Keep wounds covered with clean, dry bandages until healed. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions on proper care of the wound. Pus from infected wounds can contain MRSA so keeping the infection covered will

help prevent the spread to others. Bandages and tape can be thrown away with the regular trash.

- Clean your hands often. You, your family, and others in close contact should wash their hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub, especially after changing the bandage or touching the infected wound.
- Do not share personal items. Personal items include towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, and uniforms. Wash used sheets, towels, and clothes with water and laundry detergent. Use a dryer to dry clothes completely.

Top

Athletes Most At Risk

Skin infections including MRSA have been reported in athletes mostly in high-physical-contact sports such as wrestling, football, and rugby. However, MRSA infections have been reported among athletes in other sports such as soccer, basketball, field hockey, volleyball, rowing, martial arts, fencing, and baseball.

Even though little physical contact occurs in some sports during participation, skin contact or activities that may lead to spread of MRSA skin infections may take place before or after participation, such as in the locker room. Therefore, anyone participating in organized or recreational sports should be aware of the signs of possible skin infections and follow prevention measures.