

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.

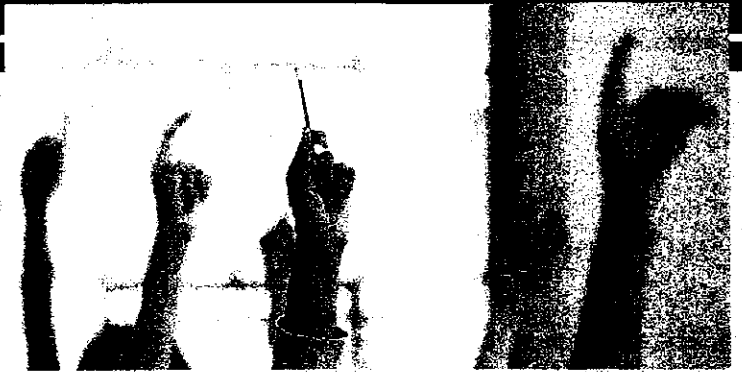


Who is at Risk?

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.



See back page to order products that prevent the spread of MRSA