



### MRSA Fact Sheet for Athletes

#### What is MRSA?

- MRSA (Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus*) is a type of “staph” bacteria that is resistant to certain antibiotics. Because of this resistance it can be hard to treat.
- MRSA can cause skin infections. Most are minor and can be treated without antibiotics. MRSA can also cause severe or deadly infections. Identifying MRSA infections early lowers the risk of severe infection.

#### What does MRSA look like?

- MRSA skin infections usually look like pimples or boils that are:
  - red
  - swollen
  - painful or
  - have pus or other drainage.People sometimes mistake these infections for spider bites.
- These infections usually occur:
  - where skin has been cut or scratched or
  - in areas covered by hair (like the back of the neck, between the legs, buttocks, armpit, or beard area of men) or
  - where sports equipment or uniforms rub or irritate the skin.

#### How is MRSA spread?

- MRSA is usually spread by contact with a person’s skin infection or objects that have touched their infected skin, like towels, bandages, razors or sports equipment.
- It is commonly spread in schools and locker rooms where athletes may share towels & sports equipment.
- You can become infected with MRSA when it gets into openings in your skin, like cuts, scrapes or even hair follicles.
- It is possible to get infected with MRSA more than once.

#### What should I do if I think I have a MRSA skin infection?

- Tell your parent and coach, athletic trainer, school nurse, gym teacher or doctor as soon as possible if you have skin that is red, warm, swollen, painful or draining pus.
  - The sooner your infection is found and treated, the sooner you can get back to playing sports and the smaller the chance that your infection will become severe.
  - Cover the affected area with a clean, dry bandage and see your doctor.
  - If other people you know or live with have the same infection, tell them to see their doctor.

- OVER -



## How are MRSA skin infections treated?

- Many MRSA skin infections can be treated by having a healthcare professional drain the infection. **Do NOT try to pop, pick at, or drain the infection yourself!** You could make it worse or spread it to others.
- Always keep draining sores covered to prevent spreading the infection to others.
- If you are given an antibiotic, take all of the doses, even if the infection is getting better, unless your doctor tells you to stop taking it. Never share antibiotics or save them for another time.
- If your infection is not better within a few days of seeing your doctor, call them.

## How can I prevent MRSA infections?

### Practice good hygiene:

- Keep your hands clean by washing them well with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand gel. Wash hands before & after playing sports, lifting weights, using shared sports equipment, and caring for cuts & sores.
- Shower immediately after exercise. Do not share bar soap or towels.
- Wash your uniform & clothing after each use.

### Take care of your skin:

- Wear protective clothing or gear made to prevent skin scrapes or cuts.
- Keep scrapes, cuts and open wounds clean and covered with clean, dry bandages.

### Do not share items that touch your skin:

- Avoid sharing personal items like towels, razors, uniforms & sports equipment that touches your skin.
- Do not share lotion or ointment that is applied by placing your hand into an open container.

### Take precautions with common surfaces & equipment:

- Put a barrier (like sports gloves, other clothing or a towel) between your skin and shared sports equipment including weight-lifting, sauna or steam-room benches.

**If you have questions about MRSA, see your healthcare provider. You may also call the Buncombe County Department of Health Disease Control Program at 828-250-5109.**

