

What is *Staphylococcus aureus* (Staph)?

Staphylococcus aureus is a bacteria that can cause skin infections and other more severe infections such as pneumonia and bloodstream infections. Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is a form of the *Staphylococcus* bacteria that has become resistant to commonly used antibiotics, such as methicillin which is related to penicillin. There are other antibiotics that can treat MRSA infections, if necessary.

What does a skin infection look like?

Symptoms of a skin infection can include swelling, redness, tenderness and pus. Skin infections sometimes look like “spider bites”, pimples or boils.

**How serious are skin infections?**

Skin infections that only involve the skin are usually mild and easily treated. Although it is rare, sometimes the bacteria can cause severe illnesses such as bloodstream infections which may be fatal. Therefore, it is very important to see your healthcare provider if you have a skin infection that is not improving.

How is *Staphylococcus aureus* spread?

Any drainage from a skin wound should be considered infectious. Staph is primarily spread through contact with the bacteria, either by direct person-to-person contact or indirectly through shared equipment, personal items or contaminated surfaces. Examples of shared objects include towels, soap, razors, clothing and athletic equipment. ***Frequent hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of MRSA.***

How is *Staphylococcus aureus* treated?

Most uncomplicated skin infections can be treated by a healthcare provider without the use of antibiotics. A quick office procedure called “Incision and Drainage” should be performed to drain the pus, then it is important to keep the area clean and covered until it is healed. In certain circumstances the healthcare provider may prescribe an antibiotic, but they usually are not needed.

What are your responsibilities as a coach, Certified Athletic Trainer, or school nurse?

- Instruct sports participants to report all suspected skin infections to the coach, Certified Athletic Trainer, or school nurse.
- Completely cover all wounds with a bandage sufficient to contain the drainage. If wounds cannot be covered completely, players with skin infections should be excluded from participating until the lesions can be covered adequately or are healed.
- Report clusters or outbreaks of illness (more than three cases in a school, classroom or sports team) to your local health department. Individuals with skin infections do NOT need to be reported.
- Bandages that become wet, loose or saturated with drainage should be removed immediately and replaced with fresh bandage. Always discard used bandages immediately into appropriate trash receptacles, and wash hands after touching or treating a skin infection.
- Wash uniforms and towels with soap and hot water at least 71 °C (160 °F), and dried in a hot dryer.
- Clean all mops and buckets regularly, and use separate mops and buckets for cleaning athletic areas, locker rooms and restrooms.
- Establish a routine cleaning schedule for shared equipment and surfaces such as helmets, benches, weights, workout machines, shower areas, floors, etc. Clean and disinfect these items when soiled, and at least daily with an EPA-approved disinfectant.
 - A diluted bleach solution may be used, but MUST be mixed daily to be effective. Use 1 tablespoon household bleach in 1 quart of cool water, or 1/4 cup bleach in one gallon of cool water.

**What should students do to prevent the spread of *Staphylococcus aureus*?**

- Keep all skin infections and wounds covered with a clean, dry bandage until healed. This keeps infection from entering or leaving. Participants should be excluded from participation if skin infection drainage cannot be completely covered and contained by a bandage.
- Avoid contact with other people’s wounds or skin infections.
- Wash hands often. If hands are not visibly soiled, use 60 -95% alcohol-based hand gel to disinfect hands.
- Shower immediately after athletic events or physical education classes. Bar soap can harbor bacteria, so liquid soap wall dispensers are recommended.
- Sharing items such as bar soap, towels, razors, clothing or equipment can spread infection, so do not share personal items.

Special considerations for sports activities:

Wrestling room and mats:

- Wipe down wall padding, benches and door handles with an EPA-registered disinfectant or a diluted bleach solution after practices/matches. Follow the manufacturer's directions for recommended contact times when using commercial products.
 - Remember to mix diluted bleach solutions daily, because they degrade quickly.
 - Use 1 tablespoon of household bleach in 1 quart cool water, or 1/4 cup bleach in one gallon of cool water.
- For any small holes or tears, use of mat tape is acceptable. Promptly replace mat covering when there are medium to large holes and/or large areas of extreme wear.
- Clean and sanitize mats before and after practice and matches. When mats are rolled up, all sides of mats should be cleaned before they are rolled up.
- Clean floors after mats are stored and before mats are used again.
- Use "dedicated" mop heads to clean mat surfaces. Wash these mop head on a regular basis.

Weight room:

- Place wall dispensers with 60-95% alcohol-based hand sanitizer at entrances and exits inside weight room. Athletes/coaches should instruct weight room users to wash hands with soap and water before entering or leaving the weight room. If hands are visibly clean, use of hand sanitizer is sufficient.
- Replace all torn and worn out padding on weight machines.
- Remove tape from weight bars and grips (these can prevent thorough cleaning).
- Wipe down grips on weights and lifting belts at least daily.
- Clean floors, benches, supports, pads, lights switches and door handles daily.



Locker Rooms/Shower Rooms

- Provide wall-mounted dispensers for soap in the shower room (next to showers).
- Soap dispensers should have disposable soap "unit" refills.
- Include adequate shower facilities when planning new and remodeled schools.
- Use "dedicated" mops to clean athletic areas, and wash mop heads on a regular basis or use a single use style mop with disposable mop cloths that are discarded after each use.

Sports Equipment

- Clean sports equipment: balls racket grips, bats, gloves, pads, etc. regularly.
- Clean and sanitize sports equipment that comes in direct contact with the skin of players, such as wrestling headgear, football helmets and fencing equipment (including wires) after each use.

Precautions for Coaches and Certified Athletic Trainers

- Include 60-95% alcohol-based hand sanitizer in first aid kit to be used when hands are not visibly soiled.
- Have disposable gloves available in first aid kit for use when caring for the scrapes and cuts of players. Use gloves once, discard immediately, then wash hands or use hand sanitizer immediately. Always clean hands after removing gloves.
- Check athletes for skin infections before practice or sports events.
- Use a scoop (not hands) when removing ice from a cooler. Clean scoops daily when in use and do not store scoops in ice cooler.

Stay healthy!
Wash your hands with soap and water often.
It's one of the easiest and best ways to prevent the spread of disease.

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