Toolkit for the Prevention of Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), in Organized Sports
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Introduction

Background
Failure to practice good hygiene and infection prevention during athletics can put students at risk of infection. Outbreaks of Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) occur in a wide variety of sports settings and cause serious infections among athletes. This toolkit is intended to empower local health departments with information they can provide to persons responsible for the health and safety of sport participants in their area.

Why a Toolkit?
Although the circumstances surrounding individual incidents may vary, the education and communication needs are consistent and predictable. Outbreaks of MRSA have the potential to attract media attention; clear and consistent messaging can alleviate fear and misperception. This toolkit contains resources and templates to facilitate a swift and effective education process.

Intended Users
The intended users of this toolkit are personnel at local health departments (including communicable disease staff and public relations professionals). Materials in this toolkit are intended to be dispersed to persons at whom the communications are targeted. While this toolkit is intended to be comprehensive, state health department subject matter experts and communication professionals are also available for consultation regarding incidences of outbreaks.

When to Use
Some materials in this toolkit are appropriate to use at the beginning of the school year, others at the beginning of a sports season, and others during an incidence of a suspected outbreak. The toolkit offers resources and template materials to facilitate education of and policy decisions by any person(s) responsible for the health and safety of sport participants. This includes county school administrators, athletic directors, coaches and trainers, parents, and athletes.

Note that this toolkit is not designed to assist with investigating a potential outbreak. Persons responsible for the health and safety of sport participants should consult with their local health department any time an outbreak of infectious disease is suspected. Local health departments should notify the state health department immediately upon identification of any outbreak, including outbreaks among participants of organized sports.

How to Use
This toolkit is composed of four sections, not all of which may be necessary for each targeted audience. The first section provides general information about MRSA that is targeted to school settings. The second section provides tools that local health departments can use to communicate with schools about how to prevent the transmission of MRSA, and provides materials that can be given to schools in order for them to be able to communicate the same message to athletic staff and to parents. The third section provides recommendations targeted toward student athletes about what they can do to avoid acquiring MRSA, which can be provided to schools for dissemination, or distributed by local health departments to any organized sports setting. The final section offers tools that local health departments may need in order to respond publicly to an outbreak of MRSA in an organized sports setting.

Questions
For additional questions and concerns regarding this toolkit please contact KDHE at 877-427-7317 or at epihotline@kdheks.gov.
Section 1: General Information about MRSA
Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) Fact Sheet

*Staphylococcus aureus* is a type of bacteria

*Staphylococcus aureus* is carried on the skin of healthy individuals and sometimes is present in the environment. It may cause skin infections that look like pimples or boils, which can be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. Some *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria (known as Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA) are resistant to certain antibiotics, which can make treatment of infections from this type of bacteria more difficult. The information on this page applies to both *Staphylococcus aureus* and MRSA.

Anyone can get *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA infections

Many of us (30-50%) periodically have *Staphylococcus aureus* living on our skin and have no symptoms or illness at all. This is called being “colonized”. Sometimes, though, *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria can enter the body through a break in the skin, a cut, or an abrasion and then cause an infection. MRSA skin infections are transmitted primarily by skin-to-skin contact and contact with surfaces that have come into contact with someone else's wound drainage. Most of these skin infections are minor (such as pimples and boils); however, *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria can cause serious infections (such as bloodstream infections and pneumonia).

Infections can be prevented by:

- **Practicing good hygiene** (keeping hands clean by washing with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and showering immediately after playing team sports or using shared gym equipment)
- **Keeping cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed**
- **Avoiding sharing personal items** (like towels and razors)
- **Using clothing or a towel between your skin and shared gym equipment**
- **Avoiding contact with other people's wounds or bandage**
- **Maintaining a clean environment** by cleaning frequently touched surfaces
- **Clean personal sports equipment regularly** (e.g. shoulder pads)

See your doctor if you think you have a *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA infection

*Staphylococcus aureus* and MRSA infections are treatable

Most *Staphylococcus aureus* infections, including MRSA infections are treatable with antibiotics. However, many *Staphylococcus aureus* skin infections, including MRSA skin infections, may be treated without antibiotics by measures such as draining the abscess or boil. Drainage of skin boils or abscesses should only be done by a healthcare provider. If, after visiting your healthcare provider the infection is not getting better after a few days, contact them again. It is possible to have a *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA skin infection come back (recur) after it has been treated. To prevent this from happening, follow your healthcare provider’s directions while you have the infection, and follow the prevention steps after the infection is gone.

People with MRSA infections generally do not need to be excluded from attending school or work

In general, exclusion from work, school and sports activities should be reserved for those with wound drainage (serosanguinous seeping or pus) that cannot be covered and contained with a clean, dry, impermeable bandage. State disease control regulations prohibit persons from working in food handling occupations until staphylococcal lesions are healed or each wound is covered with an impermeable cover (K.A.R. 28-1-6). In general, it is not necessary to close schools to "disinfect" them when MRSA infections occur.
Section 2: Communications to and for Schools
Policy Recommendations for Schools on Methicillin-Resistant
Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

*Staphylococcus aureus* is a bacterium that is commonly found on the skin or in the nose. People can have *Staphylococcus aureus* living on the skin or nose and have no symptoms. This is called being “colonized.” Sometimes the bacteria can enter the skin barrier and cause symptoms. Infections of the skin such as MRSA most commonly look like an infected pimple or boil and can worsen to include redness, warmth, swelling, pain and drainage. MRSA skin infections are commonly mistaken for a spider bite.

MRSA is spread by skin-to-skin contact, contact with drainage from the nose of a person infected or colonized with MRSA or contact with contaminated objects like razors, soap, clothing or towels.

Recommendations for individuals with MRSA include the following:

- Children or employees with MRSA do not need to be routinely excluded from the classroom. However, for food service staff, state disease control regulations prohibit persons from working in food handling occupations until staphylococcal lesions are healed or each wound is covered with an impermeable cover (K.A.R. 28-1-6).
- Those with a draining wound should keep the area covered with a clean, dry, impermeable dressing.
- If the area cannot be covered, or if drainage continues to saturate the bandage, consider exclusion until the skin infection is healed.
- The best defense against MRSA and other infections is hand washing. Soap and water or alcohol based hand gels should be readily available.
- Students should not share personal items that come in contact with the skin, including towels, washcloths, bar soap, clothing, lotion, razors, uniforms, blankets, equipment, etc.
- Surfaces that frequently come in contact with hands and other skin surfaces should be routinely cleaned with household or commercial disinfectants.
- Report any suspicious skin lesions to a physician and school nurse or administrator. Prompt recognition and treatment can prevent serious infections.
- If sport-specific rules do not exist, in general, athletes should be excluded if wounds cannot be properly covered during participation.
  - The term "properly covered" means that the skin infection is covered by a securely attached impermeable bandage that will contain all drainage and will remain intact throughout the activity. If wounds can be properly covered, good hygiene measures should be stressed to the athlete, such as performing hand hygiene before and after changing bandages and throwing used bandages in the trash.
- A healthcare provider might exclude an athlete if the activity poses a risk to the health of the infected athlete (such as injury to the infected area), even though the infection can be properly covered.
- Athletes with active infections or open wounds should not use whirlpools or therapy pools not cleaned between athletes and other common-use water facilities like swimming pools until infections and wounds are healed.

For questions please call: ______, RN, __Position Title___

_______ County Health Department ( ) ___-____
Beginning-of-School-Year Letter from Health Officer to County School Administrators, Athletic Directors, Coaches and Trainers on Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

To: _______ County School Administrators, Athletic Directors, Coaches and Trainers  
From: ________, Health Officer  
Date: 08/14/2007  
Re: Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

With the start of the fall sports season, physicians, coaches and trainers must be vigilant in observing athletes for skin infections. Signs of infection include redness, warmth, swelling, pain and/or drainage. These skin infections do not respond to most antibiotics and usually require culture to determine appropriate treatment.

*Staphylococcus aureus* infections are easily spread by skin-to-skin contact and shared items such as soap, towels, clothing and equipment.

To prevent spread of MRSA, the following are recommended:

- Athletes should shower immediately following practice and games using liquid soap. Soaps containing triclosan or chlorhexidine are preferred. Ensure availability of adequate liquid soap and hot water.
- All cuts and abrasions obtained during participation must be washed well at the time of injury and covered with a bandage. If signs of infection develop, the athlete should be seen by a physician.
- There should be no sharing of personal items that come in contact with the skin such as towels, wash cloths, bar soap, clothing, lotion, razors, uniforms, blankets, equipment, etc.
- Strongly encourage parents/guardians to wash and dry uniforms after each use in the warmest temperatures recommended by the clothing label. Protective equipment such as pads are to be wiped with disinfecting wipes or cleansers immediately after use.
- Encourage players to report skin lesions. Players with suspicious skin lesions should be referred to a physician for culture. If the physician does not culture the area, assume the lesion is MRSA and observe the appropriate precautions.
- Any player observed to have non-draining, dry, healed MRSA lesions should keep the lesions covered at all times during play or practice.
- There should be no sport participation (e.g. practice, competition, lifting weights, or sharing facilities with others) for those athletes with a draining MRSA lesion, even if the lesion is covered, until the affected area becomes non-draining.

Those who have had MRSA skin lesions may develop infection in other areas of the body. It is important to observe all athletes for lesions, particularly those with previous infection.

For questions please call: ________, RN, ___Position Title___ ,  
_______ County Health Department ( ) ___-____  
cc: ____________, ______ County Board of Education
Prevention of MRSA Infections in Athletic Facilities

**Encourage Hygiene among Athletes**

- Refer athletes to the Information & Advice for Athletes page.
- Make sure supplies are available to comply with prevention measures (e.g., liquid soap in shower and at sinks, bandages for covering wounds, alcohol-based hand rubs for good hand hygiene, disinfectant for surface cleaning, etc.).
- Enforce policies and encourage practices designed to prevent disease spread. Make sure athletes:
  - keep wounds covered and contained
  - shower immediately after participation
  - shower before using whirlpools
  - wash and dry uniforms after each use
  - report possible infections to coach, athletic trainer, school nurse, other healthcare providers, or parents.

**Cleaning & Disinfecting Athletic Facilities**

Detailed information can be found on the Cleaning & Disinfecting Athletic Facilities for MRSA page.

**Excluding Athletes with MRSA Infections from Participation**

- If sport-specific rules do not exist, in general, athletes should be excluded if wounds cannot be properly covered during participation.
  - The term "properly covered" means that the skin infection is covered by a securely attached bandage or dressing that will contain all drainage and will remain intact throughout the activity. If wounds can be properly covered, good hygiene measures should be stressed to the athlete such as performing hand hygiene before and after changing bandages and throwing used bandages in the trash.
- A healthcare provider might exclude an athlete if the activity poses a risk to the health of the infected athlete (such as injury to the infected area), even though the infection can be properly covered.

**Athletes with active infections or open wounds should not use whirlpools or therapy pools not cleaned between athletes and other common-use water facilities like swimming pools until infections and wounds are healed.**
Cleaning & Disinfecting Athletic Facilities for MRSA

Shared equipment that comes into direct skin contact should be cleaned after each use and allowed to dry. Equipment such as helmets and protective gear should be cleaned according to the equipment manufacturers’ instructions to make sure the cleaner will not harm the item.

- Athletic facilities such as locker rooms should always be kept clean whether or not MRSA infections have occurred among the athletes.
- Review cleaning procedures and schedules with the janitorial/environmental service staff.
  - Cleaning procedures should focus on commonly touched surfaces and surfaces that come into direct contact with people's bare skin each day.
  - Cleaning with detergent-based cleaners or Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered detergents/disinfectants will remove MRSA from surfaces.
  - Disinfectants that are registered by the Environmental Protection Agency and labeled as effective against *Staphylococcus aureus* will likely kill MRSA. The EPA provides a list of registered products that have been tested against MRSA.
  - Cleaners and disinfectants, including household chlorine bleach, can be irritating, and exposure to these chemicals has been associated with health problems such as asthma and skin and eye irritation.
    - Take appropriate precautions described on the product's label instructions to reduce exposure. Wearing personal protective equipment such as gloves and eye protection may be indicated.
  - Follow the instruction labels on all cleaners and disinfectants, including household chlorine bleach, to make sure they are used safely and correctly.
    - Some key questions that should be answered by reading the label include:
      - How should the cleaner or disinfectant be applied?
      - Do you need to clean the surface first before using the disinfectant (e.g., pre-cleaned surfaces)?
      - Is it safe for the surface? Some cleaners and disinfectants, including household chlorine bleach, might damage some surfaces (e.g., metals, fabrics, some plastics).
      - How long do you need to leave it on the surface to be effective (i.e., contact time)?
      - Do you need to rinse the surface with water after using the cleaner or disinfectant?
      - Does the product need to be mixed with water before use? How much product and how much water? Disinfectants must be diluted according to the label directions to be safe and effective.
  - If you are using household chlorine bleach, check the label to see if the product has specific instructions for disinfection. If no disinfection instructions exist, then use 1/4 cup of regular household bleach in 1 gallon of water for disinfection of pre-cleaned surfaces.
  - Environmental cleaners and disinfectants should not be put onto skin or wounds and should never be used to treat infections.
- There is a lack of evidence that large-scale use of disinfectants (e.g., spraying or fogging rooms or surfaces) will prevent MRSA infections more effectively than a more targeted approach of cleaning frequently-touched surfaces.
- Repair or dispose of equipment and furniture with damaged surfaces that do not allow surfaces to be adequately cleaned.
Information and Advice about MRSA for:  
Coaches & Athletic Directors

At the beginning of the season refer athletes to: Beginning-of-Athletics-Season Letter to Athletes and Parents on Prevention of Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and Prevention Information and Advice for Athletes

**Promote and Encourage the Prevention Steps for Athletes**

- Practice good personal hygiene.
- Take care of your skin.
- Do not share items that come into contact with your skin.
- Take precautions with common surfaces and equipment.
- Report skin lesions to coaches, trainers, the school nurse, or your healthcare provider immediately.
- Seek professional medical care for wounds that appear infected, and comply fully with your doctor’s recommendations.

**What to Do if You Think an Athlete Has MRSA**

- Refer athletes with possible infections to a healthcare provider such as team physician, athletic trainer, school nurse, or primary care doctor.
  - If the athlete is less than 18 years old, notify parents/guardians of the athlete about the possible infection.
- Educate athletes on ways to prevent spreading the infection.
- Using the criteria below, consider excluding the athlete from participation until evaluated by a healthcare provider.

**Excluding Athletes with MRSA Infections from Participation**

- If sport-specific rules do not exist, in general, athletes should be excluded if wounds cannot be properly covered during participation.
  - The term "properly covered" means that the skin infection is covered by a securely attached bandage or dressing that will contain all drainage and will remain intact throughout the activity. If wounds can be properly covered, good hygiene measures should be stressed to the athlete such as performing hand hygiene before and after changing bandages and throwing used bandages in the trash.
- A healthcare provider might exclude an athlete if the activity poses a risk to the health of the infected athlete (such as injury to the infected area), even though the infection can be properly covered.
- Athletes with active infections or open wounds should not use whirlpools or therapy pools not cleaned between athletes and other common-use water facilities like swimming pools until infections and wounds are healed.
- Excluded athletes should be kept from participating in practice, competition, lifting weights, or sharing facilities with others.

**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.

**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.

**Policies and Actions that can Help Prevent the Spread of Communicable Skin Infections**

• Be observant for any active skin lesions and encourage all participants to report active skin lesions before all practices or competitions.
• Any cut or break in the skin (e.g., mat burns, skin trauma, or shaving injury) should be washed immediately with liquid soap and water and then covered with a clean, dry, impermeable dressing.
• Require washing and covering of all wounds on a daily basis, before and after participation in practice, games, or any other use of sports facilities.
• Require optimal hygiene at all times, including frequent hand-washing with soap or alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
• Require showering and thorough washing with liquid soap and water by all participants of contact sports (e.g., wrestling and football) after practices or competitions. Encourage showering and thorough washing before practices or competitions.
• Do not allow players to share towels or other personal items (e.g., clothing, equipment, balms, or lubricants).
• Encourage athletes to use a towel or clothing to act as a barrier between shared equipment and bare skin (e.g., weight and locker room benches and training tables).
• Require that participants have clean clothing and equipment before all practices or competitions.
• Wash uniforms and clothing after each use following the clothing label's instructions for washing and drying. Drying clothes completely in a dryer is preferred.
• Clean athletic facilities regularly and shared surfaces daily (e.g., weights, locker room surfaces, and training equipment).
• Clean equipment, such as helmets and protective gear, after use according to manufacturers’ instructions.
• Clean all other shared equipment after each use and allow items to dry thoroughly.
• Clean wrestling mats at least twice daily, immediately after practice or competition and during a halfway practice break (if possible) or before the start of competitions.
• Clean and disinfect environmental surfaces and athletic equipment that has contacted potentially infectious wound drainage, blood, or non-intact skin. Follow instruction labels on all cleaners/disinfectants, including household chlorine bleach, to ensure safe and correct usage at recommended concentration with appropriate contact time on surfaces.
Sample Letter to Parents Regarding an MRSA Outbreak

Date: 08/14/2007

Dear Parent/Guardian:

We have received reports of _______ confirmed cases of an antibiotic-resistant skin infection called Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in (a class or among student athletes participating in ________). ________ additional (students, sport-specific players) have skin lesions, but MRSA infections have not been confirmed in these students.

MRSA is a type of “staph” infection that is resistant to many antibiotics and occasionally causes skin infections. Common signs of a skin infection include redness, warmth, swelling and tenderness. Often a MRSA infection will look like a spider bite, boil, abscess or turf burn. If it is left untreated, it could progress into a more serious illness.

MRSA skin infections are generally spread by skin-to-skin contact or by direct contact with the infected wound drainage. They may also be spread by contact with contaminated surfaces or things such as sports equipment or personal hygiene items. MRSA skin infections are not spread through the air.

The presence of MRSA is not unique to ________ County. Outbreaks of MRSA have occurred across the country and they have become more common within athletic settings. Attached is a fact sheet about Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA). It includes recommendations to prevent the transmission of MRSA.

Please be aware of the signs and symptoms of MRSA. If you or a family member have the symptoms described on the attached fact sheet, please contact your medical provider and the ________ county health department at (###) ###-####. For more information on MRSA, you can visit http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa.
Section 3: Communications to Student Athletes
MRSA 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 and getting care early will reduce the amount of playing time lost and decrease the chance that the infection will become severe.
  - Pay attention for signs of infection 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.

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.

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.

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.
Beginning-of-Athletics-Season Letter to Athletes and Parents on Prevention of Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

Staphylococcus aureus is a bacterium that is commonly found on the skin or in the nose. People can have “staph” living on the skin or in the nose and have no symptoms. This is called being “colonized.” Sometimes the bacteria can enter the skin barrier and cause symptoms. Infections of the skin such as MRSA most commonly look like an infected pimple or boil and can worsen to include redness, warmth, swelling, pain and drainage.

MRSA is spread by skin-to-skin contact, contact with drainage from the nose of a person infected or colonized with MRSA or contact with contaminated objects like razors, soap, clothing or towels.

To prevent spread of MRSA, the following are recommended:

- The best defense against MRSA and other infections is hand washing.
- Athletes should shower immediately following practice and games using liquid soap. Soaps containing triclosan or chlorhexidine are preferred. You may want to consider providing your child with his or her own bottle of liquid soap.
- All cuts and abrasions must be washed well at the time of injury and 3 – 4 times a day thereafter until healed. If signs of infection develop, the athlete should see their physician.
- There should be no sharing of personal items such as towels, washcloths, bar soaps, clothing, lotion, razors, uniforms, equipment, etc. Please provide your child with these items and encourage him/her to not share with other athletes.
- Uniforms should be washed after each use and dried in the dryer. Protective equipment such as pads are to be wiped with disinfecting wipes or cleansers daily.
- Report suspicious skin lesions to and have these areas evaluated by your doctor. Prompt recognition and treatment can prevent severe infections.
- Any player observed to have non-draining, dry, healed MRSA lesions is to keep the lesions covered at all times during play or practice.
- There should be no sport participation for those athletes with a draining MRSA lesion until no drainage is present and the area can be covered with a bandage and uniform.

For questions please call: _______ RN, ___ Position Title __________

_______ County Health Department ( ) ___-____
Section 4: Communications for Local Health Departments
Managing MRSA Outbreaks

Persons responsible for the health and safety of sport participants

Contact your local/county health department about any incidence of MRSA among your athletes.

Local Health Department Reporting of MRSA Outbreak to State Health Departments

MRSA is not a reportable condition in Kansas, but outbreaks of any disease, including MRSA, are reportable to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. An outbreak is defined as two or more cases that are linked in time and place. To report an outbreak of MRSA, contact the Kansas Department of Health and Environment’s Epidemiology Hotline at 877-427-7317.
Example Press Release to Address an Outbreak of MRSA in an Organized Sports Setting

*Staphylococcus aureus* Skin Infections: Increasingly More Common Yet Serious

In response to the recent cases of skin infections among sport team members in _________ County and nationwide, the _________ County Health Department would like to provide the following information regarding recognizing, preventing and treating staph infections.

*Staphylococcus aureus* (staph) is a bacterium that has been around for decades and has been seen in all ages and all areas of the world. It is found on the skin and in the noses of about 30% of healthy people. It is spread when the skin of one person comes in contact with the skin of another infected person or in contact with contaminated objects. The most common infections caused by staph involve the skin and appear as boils, abscesses or cellulitis. Early infections often look like a spider bite.

In the past several years, some strains of staph have become resistant to some antibiotics. These infections, called Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) are increasingly seen in communities from young children to older adults and among members of sports teams such as football and wrestling as well as other sports that involve skin to skin contact and often result in skin abrasions.

Infection can often be prevented by early topical efforts and soaps. Severe infections can often be prevented by quick recognition and treatment of the infection. The following are steps to prevent skin infections, what to do if you suspect you or your child may have a staph infection, and what to do to prevent spread to other family members:

- Do not share **any** personal belongings such as towels, washcloths, razors, nail clippers, lotions, clothing, uniforms or soap with others.
- Daily, wash uniforms, clothes, washcloths and towels and any other material that may have come in contact with the area of infection and dry in the dryer rather than air drying. This helps kill the bacteria.
- Heavily soiled clothing should be washed in hot water and detergent or in warm water with bleach.
- Promptly clean cuts and abrasions with water and liquid soap, and apply antibiotic ointment.
- Promptly see your doctor if you notice any area of redness or soreness such as a pimple, boil or abscess, and follow the advice given, taking all medications prescribed.
- Cover any infected area with a clean, dry bandage. The drainage from these areas can contain staph, so keeping the area covered will help prevent the spread to others.
- Use gloves when changing the gauze, and **wash hands often**, especially before contact with others and after handling the infected area or bandages, even if gloves are used. Use soap and water or alcohol based hand wash.
- Maintain a clean environment. Disinfect surfaces and objects with a household disinfectant, wipes containing ammonia or triclosan or a bleach solution (1 cup bleach to 9 cups of water). Allow to air dry.
- Eliminate unnecessary shaving, such as arms, and other activities that can cause cuts and skin abrasion. Cuts from shaving should be treated like abrasions or areas or trauma.

Additional measures to prevent infections among sports and fitness participants include:
• Washing hands before and after fitness activities and when entering and leaving locker rooms, weight rooms and other common areas. Alcohol based hand sanitizers can be used if hands are not visibly dirty.
• To prevent cuts and abrasions, wear protective clothing over as much of the body as possible.
• Shower after practices/games using a liquid antibacterial soap.
• Physical activities can be resumed when there is no drainage from the infected area and healing, non-draining lesions can be covered and contained with the use of bandages. Make sure the bandage remains in place during activities.

These important steps can help prevent and control skin infections. For additional information or questions, call _________, R.N. or ________, R.N. at ( ) ___-____.

###
Resources for Education and Supporting Materials

Factsheets

Size: 8.5" X 11" 1 page
Download PDF for printing [PDF - 1.53 MB]

Size: 8.5" X 11" 1 page
Download PDF for printing [PDF - 914 KB]

Size: 8.5" X 11" 1 page
Download PDF for printing [PDF - 2.12 MB]
**Athletic Posters**

**Title:** Who's playing DEFENSE?

**Message:** Protect against skin infections. Good hygiene and taking care of your skin are the best protection against skin infections.

Order 11”x17” professionally-printed posters (5 for $25)
Download & Print (11”x17” high-resolution)
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**Title:** Don't let infection get under your skin.

**Message:** Cuts and scrapes are part of the game. Take care of them properly.

Order 11”x17” professionally-printed posters (5 for $22)
Download & Print (11”x17” high-resolution)
[Download now](#) [PDF - 1.16MB]

**Title:** Take Care of Your Skin. Tips for Athletes (Hockey)

**Message:** Keep it clean! Washing hands and showering with soap and water protect against skin infections.

Order 11”x17” professionally-printed posters (5 for $25)
Download & Print (11”x17” high-resolution)
[Download now](#) [PDF - 766KB]
**Title:** Take Care of Your Skin. Tips for Athletes (Soccer)

**Message:** Keep it clean! Washing hands and showering with soap and water protect against skin infections. Stay healthy. To avoid skin infections: Wash your hands frequently. Shower after playing sports; use a clean towel. Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage. Take Care Of Your Skin: Tips for Athletes Tell your coach or athletic trainer if you think you have a skin infection.

Order 11”x17” professionally-printed posters (4 for $22)
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**National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Posters**

The following six posters were created as part of a collaboration between CDC and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). You may download all six posters in the following file or individually as listed below.

Download all 6 NCAA Posters now [PDF - 1.43MB]
(11”x17” high-resolution)

**Title:** Bandages always make the cut.

**Message:** Practice good wound care: Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed. Avoid contact with other people’s wounds or bandages. Your health matters.

Download & Print (11”x17” high-resolution)
Download now [PDF - 361KB]

**Title:** Blood is not part of your uniform.

**Message:** Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed. Avoid contact with other people’s wounds or bandages. Wash your hands before and after changing bandages.

Download & Print (11”x17” high-resolution)
Download now [PDF - 193KB]
Title: When in doubt, check it out.

Message: Report skin infections to your athletic trainer, coach or team physician. Recognize the signs of infections: skin sores/lesions that have redness, pain, swelling or pus. Don't treat yourself.

Download & Print (11"x17" high-resolution)
Download now [PDF - 234KB]

Title: Skin infections can be passed between athletes.

Message: Practice good health: Report skin infections to your athletic trainer, coach or team physician. Recognize the signs of infection: skin sores/lesions that have redness, pain, swelling or pus. Don't treat yourself. When in doubt, check it out.

Download & Print (11"x17" high-resolution)
Download now [PDF - 377KB]

Title: A good player will pass the ball, not staph.

Message: Do not share personal items such as towels and razors. Wash your hands frequently. Shower immediately after each practice and game. Use clean towels each time you shower. Launder clothes and towels after each use.

Download & Print (11"x17" high-resolution)
Download now [PDF - 257KB]

Title: Winners share the ball, not their germs.

Message: Practice good hygiene: Do not share personal items, such as towels or razors. Wash your hands frequently. Shower immediately after every practice and game. Use clean towels each time you shower. Launder clothes and towels after each use. Your health matters.

Download & Print (11"x17" high-resolution)
Download now [PDF - 245KB]
General Hygiene Posters

Title: Don't give bacteria a free ride. (blue background)

Message: Washing your hands with soap and water is one of the best ways to prevent diseases.

Download & Print (11"x17" high-resolution)
Blue background (English) [PDF - 493KB]
Blue background (Español) [PDF - 892KB]

Title: Sharing isn't always caring.

Message: Sharing personal items like towels, razors, or tweezers can spread diseases.

Download & Print (11"x17" high-resolution)
Black background (English) [PDF - 787KB]
Black background (Español) [PDF - 798KB]
White background (English) [PDF - 739KB]
White background (Español) [PDF - 739KB]

Title: Sharing isn't always caring. (blue background)

Message: Sharing personal items like towels, razors, or tweezers can spread diseases.

Download & Print (11"x17" high-resolution)
Blue background (English) [PDF - 119KB]
Blue background (Español) [PDF - 98KB]
Title: Is it a spider bite?

Message: If you think you have a spider bite, it might actually be an infection that needs medical attention. When in doubt, check it out.

Download & Print (11"x17" high-resolution)
Black background (English) [PDF - 91KB]
Black background (Español) [PDF - 89KB]
White background (English) [PDF - 87KB]
White background (Español) [PDF - 86KB]

Title: Is it a spider bite? (blue background)

Message: If you think you have a spider bite, it might actually be an infection that needs medical attention.

Download & Print (11"x17" high-resolution)
Blue background (English) [PDF - 42KB]
Blue background (Español) [PDF - 47KB]