

Infection Control Guidance for Middle & High School Athletic Directors



Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

MRSA is a type of “staph” bacteria that is resistant to penicillin as well as some other common antibiotics. MRSA commonly causes skin infections that may look like spider bites, infected turf burns, impetigo, boils or abscesses. It is spread by touching the infection/drainage or by touching surfaces that have come in contact with the infection/drainage. MRSA can stay on surfaces for weeks. (see *Can a skin infection bench my team?*—an annotated bibliography on MRSA outbreaks in athletes that is included in this toolkit.)

Effective consistent hand washing is the best way to prevent MRSA. It is also important to have students and coaches practice good hygiene, including showering after practice and game/meets; not share personal hygiene items (such as towels, washcloths, razors, and bar soap) and not participate in practices/games/meets when they have a draining wound/lesion. A healthy environment should be maintained by routinely cleaning athletic equipment (balls, bats, and rackets) and surfaces, such as benches and wrestling mats. Wrestling head gear and football helmets/pads should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.

Ask your athletes to report all potential skin infections to their coaches, the trainer and/or the school nurse. Open wounds should be covered with a clean, dry bandage that is taped to the skin on all four sides. Do not let athletes participate in wrestling if they have potentially contagious wounds, even if covered. Consider not letting athletes participate in *any* contact sport if they have potentially contagious wounds, refer them to medical providers for treatment.

Our recommendations, listed below, may refer to policies that are already in place, as well as policies that should be developed and adopted.

Clostridium difficile

C. difficile is a toxin producing, spore forming bacteria that can cause mild to severe, life threatening diarrheal disease. *C. difficile* is most commonly found in older adults who are patients in hospitals or long term care facilities. In recent years, however, otherwise healthy people who have not been hospitalized or in long term care facilities have become ill with *C. difficile* infection.

C. difficile is primarily spread through contact with the bacteria or its spores, either by direct person-to-person contact or indirectly through shared equipment, objects, or contaminated surfaces. *C. difficile* spores can stay on environmental surfaces for months.

There are many EPA-registered disinfectants that kill *C. difficile* vegetative cells but *very few that kill C. difficile spores*. Be sure the product you use kills *C. difficile* spores. A 1:10 sodium hypochlorite (bleach) solution or product will kill *C. difficile* spores.

General Guidance

1. All environmental hard surfaces that may come in contact with body fluids should be cleaned and disinfected daily with an EPA-approved disinfectant, including benches and workout machines (pads, rests, etc.). Clean all visibly soiled areas with a detergent, using friction. Rinse, and then disinfect clean areas to remove bacteria. Always wear gloves when using disinfectants.
2. All floors/wall padding in athletic settings should be cleaned daily (if room is used).
3. Locker rooms, including any shower areas should be cleaned daily, if used.
4. A 1:10 sodium hypochlorite (household bleach) solution or product is needed for disinfection if there is body fluid present, e.g., vomiting, diarrhea, blood.
 - a. Remember to clean the surface first, rinse it, and then disinfect it with 1:10 bleach solution.
 - b. Commercially available, EPA-approved 1:10 bleach products (*such as Clorox, PDI, or Dispatch bleach wipes*) contain a detergent base which is helpful in cleaning as well as disinfecting.
 - c. Never add soap or detergent to a bleach solution yourself because of potential serious compatibility issues.
 - d. *Remember there is a five minute wet contact time for 1:10 bleach products/ solution.*
5. If soap is furnished, it should NOT be bar soap and it should be accessible from a wall dispenser.
6. Towels should not be shared. If they are washed at school, they should be washed in laundry detergent and water at 160°F (71°C) minimum and dried thoroughly in a hot dryer.
7. Ensure that athletic areas, locker rooms and restrooms all have separate cleaning mops and buckets, and that all mops (washable micro-fiber heads or disposable mop cloths preferred) and buckets are cleaned regularly.

Wrestling Room and Mats

1. Wipe down padding along walls, benches and door pulls/knobs with a quaternary ammonium (quat) after practices/matches. Please refer to the manufacturer's directions for recommended contact times for the various disinfectants.
2. Clean floors when mats are stored and before mats are used again.
3. Use "dedicated" mops to clean athletic areas, and wash mop heads on a regular basis. May use Swiffer style mop if mop clothes are discarded after each use.
4. Mat tape may be used to cover *small* holes and *small* tears on top and bottom surfaces of mats. Tape mats together for practice as well as for matches to cover up mat sides that are in poor condition.
5. Replace mat coverings promptly when there are medium to large holes and/or large areas of excessive wear.
6. 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.
7. Use "dedicated" mop heads to clean mat surfaces. Wash these mop heads on a regular basis.

Weight Room

1. Replace all torn and worn out padding on weight machines.
2. Place wall dispensers with 60% alcohol-based (or greater) hand sanitizer at entrances/exits inside weight room. Athletes/coaches should be instructed to use hand sanitizer (or wash their hands with soap and water) when entering and leaving weight room (minimum use, may use more often).
3. If hands are visibly dirty, they should *always* use soap and water to wash before entering the weight room.
4. Remove tape from weight bars and grips. (Metal surfaces are easier to wipe down.)
5. Wipe down grips on weights and lifting belts at least daily.
6. Clean floors, benches, supports, pads, light switches and door pulls/knobs daily.
7. Discourage the use of shared equipment like lifting belts.

Locker Rooms/Shower Rooms

1. Provide wall-mounted dispensers for soap in shower room (next to showers).
2. Soap dispensers should have disposable soap “unit” refills.
3. Provide adequate shower facilities.

Sports Equipment

1. Schedule regular cleanings for sports equipment: balls (football, basketballs, baseballs, softballs, volley balls), racket grips, bats, gloves, pads, etc.
2. Clean and disinfect 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.

Coach

1. Include 60% or greater alcohol-based hand sanitizer in coach’s first aid kit so that coaches/trainers will always be able to sanitize hands before and after caring for each injured player when soap and water is not readily available. *Remember that alcohol-based hand sanitizer does not kill C. difficile spores.*
2. Have disposable gloves readily available in first aid kit for use when caring for the scrapes and cuts of players. Use gloves once then discard, wash hands or use hand sanitizer immediately after removing gloves.
3. Check athletes for skin infections before practice or games/matches. Do not let athletes participate in wrestling if they have potentially contagious wounds, even if covered. Consider not letting athletes participate in any contact sport if they have a potentially contagious wound.
4. Refer athletes with potential skin infections either to the team physician or their own medical provider. Culturing wounds should be encouraged.
5. Use scoop (not hands) when taking ice out of cooler to make ice packs to treat sports injuries. Also, clean scoop and cooler daily when in use and do not store scoop in ice cooler.
6. Do not have shared “drinking” water bottles; each player should have his/her own water container.
7. Shower immediately after matches/games/practices when there is physical contact with the athletes.

Athlete

1. **Remind athletes that washing their hands with warm, soapy water effectively and consistently is one of the best things they can do to prevent MRSA, C. difficile and other diseases.**
2. Strongly encourage showering with soap and water immediately after practice/games/ matches.
3. Remind athletes NOT to share personal hygiene items (bar soap, towels, and razors), clothing or water bottles.
4. Remind athletes NOT to share antibiotics or ointments and salves.
5. Remind athletes NOT to touch other peoples’ skin infections.
6. Remind athletes NOT to touch face, nose or groin while in practice/matches/games.
7. Ask athletes to consider refraining from cosmetic shaving. If they feel they must shave, encourage them to do so a few days before they participate in sports events to help minimize their vulnerability to skin infections.
8. Ask athletes to treat any draining wound as a potential skin infection.
9. Encourage athletes who use the weight room to wear workout clothing that minimizes bare skin contact with benches, weight equipment, etc.
10. Remind athletes to wear practice clothes/uniforms only once, then wash them with laundry detergent and water and dry in a hot dryer.
11. Remind athletes to report skin abrasions, wounds and potential skin infections to a coach/trainer and/or the school nurse.

12. Ask athletes to avoid whirlpools or common tubs. Individuals with scratches or open wounds can easily infect others in this kind of environment.
13. Inform parents of all these precautionary measures.

Outside Groups Using High School Athletic Facilities

1. Continue to ensure that custodians know schedule for outside events and are available to clean before students use any of the equipment/facilities.
2. Instruct outside groups to use the “standard school-recommended” cleaning products if they are responsible for any cleaning (i.e. wrestling mats, weight room equipment, and shower facilities).