



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

CDC 24/7: Saving Lives. Protecting People.™

Information and Advice about MRSA for:

Coaches & Athletic Directors

Refer athletes to: [Information & Advice for Athletes \(advice-for-athletes.html\)](#)

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.

More about the prevention steps for athletes... ([advice-for-athletes.html#prevSteps](#))

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 with the possible infection.
- Educate athletes on ways to prevent spreading the infection.
- Using the criteria above, 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.

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.

[Read more about the spread of MRSA... \(/mrsa/causes/index.html\)](/mrsa/causes/index.html)

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.

[Read more about people at risk of MRSA... \(/mrsa/riskfactors/index.html\)](/mrsa/riskfactors/index.html)

Cleaning & Disinfecting Athletic Facilities When an MRSA Infection Occurs

Read about this on the [Cleaning & Disinfecting for MRSA page \(/mrsa/environment/index.html\)](/mrsa/environment/index.html).

Additional Resources:

- [Prevention of MRSA in Athletic Facilities \(/mrsa/prevent/athletic.html\)](/mrsa/prevent/athletic.html)

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[National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases \(NCEZID\)](#)
[Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion \(DHQP\)](#)

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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 early and getting care will reduce the amount of playing time lost and decrease the chance that the infection will become severe.
 - Pay attention for signs of infections 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).

[Read more about MRSA treatment... \(/mrsa/treatment/index.html\)](/mrsa/treatment/index.html)

MRSA Education Initiative



[\(/mrsa/mrsa_initiative/skin_infection/index.html\)](/mrsa/mrsa_initiative/skin_infection/index.html)

Helping Americans better recognize and prevent MRSA skin infections. Find MRSA education materials for parents, athletes and childcare providers.

Prevention Steps for Athletes

Practice good personal hygiene

In addition to practicing [good personal hygiene \(/mrsa/prevent/personal.html\)](/mrsa/prevent/personal.html), 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.

[Read more about preventing MRSA in athletic facilities... \(/mrsa/prevent/athletic.html\)](/mrsa/prevent/athletic.html)

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[Read more about the spread of MRSA... \(/mrsa/causes/index.html\)](/mrsa/causes/index.html)

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.

[Read more about preventing MRSA... \(/mrsa/prevent/index.html\)](/mrsa/prevent/index.html)

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Environmental Cleaning & Disinfecting for MRSA

What's the difference between cleaners, sanitizers, and disinfectants?

- **Cleaners or detergents** are products that are used to remove soil, dirt, dust, organic matter, and germs (like bacteria, viruses, and fungi). Cleaners or detergents work by washing the surface to lift dirt and germs off surfaces so they can be rinsed away with water. The same thing happens when you wash your hands with soap and water or when you wash dishes. Rinsing is an important part of the cleaning process. Use these products for routine cleaning of surfaces.
- **Sanitizers** are used to reduce germs from surfaces but not totally get rid of them. Sanitizers reduce the germs from surfaces to levels that considered safe.
- **Disinfectants** are chemical products that destroy or inactivate germs and prevent them from growing. Disinfectants have no effect on dirt, soil, or dust. Disinfectants are regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). You can use a disinfectant after cleaning for surfaces that have visible blood or drainage from infected skin.

Which disinfectants should I use against MRSA?

Disinfectants effective against *Staphylococcus aureus* or staph are most likely also effective against MRSA. These products are readily available from grocery stores and other retail stores. Check the disinfectant product's label on the back of the container. Most, if not all, disinfectant manufacturers will provide a list of germs on their label that their product can destroy. Use disinfectants that are registered by the EPA (check for an EPA registration number on the product's label to confirm that it is registered).

How should cleaners and disinfectants be used?

Read the label first. Each cleaner and disinfectant has instructions on the label that tell you important facts:

- How to apply the product to a surface.
- How long you need to leave it on the surface to be effective (contact time).
- If the surface needs to be cleaned first and rinsed after using.
- If the disinfectant is safe for the surface.
- Whether the product requires dilution with water before use.
- Precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves or aprons or making sure you have good ventilation during application.

Laundry

Routine laundry procedures, detergents, and laundry additives will all help to make clothes, towels, and linens safe to wear or touch. If items have been contaminated by infectious material, these may be laundered separately, but this is not absolutely necessary.

[More about laundry... \(Laundry.html\)](#)