

# MRSA FACT SHEET

## What is MRSA?

MRSA is methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, a potentially dangerous type of staph bacteria that is resistant to certain antibiotics and may cause skin and other infections. As with all regular staph infections, recognizing the signs and receiving treatment for MRSA skin infections in the early stages reduces the chances of the infection becoming severe. MRSA is spread by:

- > Having direct contact with another person's infection
- > Sharing personal items, such as towels or razors, that have touched infected skin
- > Touching surfaces or items, such as used bandages, contaminated with MRSA

## What are the signs and symptoms?

Most staph skin infections, including MRSA, appear as a bump or infected area on the skin that may be:

- > Red
- > Swollen
- > Painful
- > Warm to the touch
- > Full of pus or other drainage
- > Accompanied by a fever



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<http://phil.cdc.gov>

## What if I suspect an MRSA skin infection?

Cover the area with a bandage and contact your healthcare professional. It is especially important to contact your healthcare professional if signs and symptoms of an MRSA skin infection are accompanied by a fever.

## How are MRSA skin infections treated?

Treatment for MRSA skin infections may include having a healthcare professional drain the infection and, in some cases, prescribe an antibiotic. Do not attempt to drain the infection yourself – doing so could worsen or spread it to others. If you are given an antibiotic, be sure to take all of the doses (even if the infection is getting better), unless your healthcare professional tells you to stop taking it.

## How can I protect my family from MRSA skin infections?

- > Know the signs of MRSA skin infections and get treated early
- > Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered
- > Encourage good hygiene such as cleaning hands regularly
- > Discourage sharing of personal items such as towels and razors

**For more information, please call  
1-800-CDC-INFO or visit [www.cdc.gov/MRSA](http://www.cdc.gov/MRSA).**

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## Prevention Information and Advice

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## 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).

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[MRSA treatment information for clinicians...](#)

## Prevention Steps for Athletes

[National MRSA Education Initiative \(posters/index.html\)](#)

 [\(posters/index.html\)](#)

Educational materials for coaches and athletes.

In addition to practicing [good personal hygiene \(community/index.html#how3\)](#), athletes and visitors to athletic facilities should also:

- Keep your hands clean by washing often with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
  - At a minimum, hands should be cleaned before and after playing sports and doing activities such as using shared weight-training equipment, caring for wounds, and after using the toilet.
  - Liquid soap is preferred over bar soap to limit sharing.
  - If hands are not visibly dirty and sinks are not available for hand washing (for example, while on the field or in the weight room), alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol content can be used.
- 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 cuts and wounds 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 including weight-training, sauna, and steam-room benches.

[Read more about preventing MRSA in athletic facilities...](#)

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## Why MRSA is Spread among Athletes

MRSA might spread easily among athletes 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.
- Are sometimes not able to shower or wash hands after exercise or after using shared equipment.

[Read more about the spread of MRSA...](#)

## How to Prevent Spreading MRSA If You Have it

- Cover your wounds. Keep wounds covered with clean, dry bandages until healed. Follow your doctor's instructions about 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. Do not try to treat the infection yourself by picking or popping the sore.
- 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 and clothing, including uniforms.
- Wash used sheets, towels, and clothes with water and laundry detergent. Use a dryer to dry them completely.
- Wash clothes according to manufacturer's instructions on the label. Clean your hands after touching dirty clothes.

## Athletes Most At Risk

Skin infections including MRSA are most commonly reported among athletes in sports with a lot of physical contact. This includes 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 some sports involve only small amounts of physical contact, MRSA spread might 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...](#)

## Additional Resources:

- [Prevention of MRSA in Athletic Facilities](#)

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National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID) (</ncezid/dw-index.html>)