

Athletes and Staph Infections – Care & Prevention

What is a Staph Infection?

- Staphylococcus aureus is common and causes boils and soft tissue infections.
- The CDC (Centers for Disease Control) estimates – that 20-35% of US Citizens have been colonized with the bacteria – but do not show illness.
- Colonization usually occurs in the armpit, groin, genital area, and most frequently the inside of the nose.
- **Most infections occur through direct physical contact of the staph bacteria with a break in the skin or during contact with inanimate objects (such as clothing, linens, or furniture) soiled with wound drainage.**
- The bacterium is not carried through the air and is not found in dirt or mud.
- **A patient's presenting complaint of "spider bite" should raise suspicion of an *S. aureus* infection.**
 - **#1 Rule: If you didn't see the spider and you didn't feel the spider bite, then it could be the development of a Staph infection**
- Infections usually are easy to treat with inexpensive, well-tolerated antibiotics – BUT some staph bacteria have developed resistance.

Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus:

- Known as "MRSA"
- Staph bacteria that has become resistant to normal antibiotics and can not be treated easily.
- While 25% to 30% of people are colonized* in the nose with staph, less than 2% are colonized with MRSA (Gorwitz RJ et al. Journal of Infectious Diseases. 2008:197:1226-34.).
- Treatment longer, more expensive, more complicated, and can reappear frequently.
- MRSA was limited to hospitals and long term care facilities – but in 2002 outbreaks associated with sports teams started being reported.
- **This is why we recommend a visit to an MD for possible infections – with a request for a culture of the site.**

With Your Healthcare Team – Athletic Trainer / Nurse / Physician:

- Report any possible infection.
- Upon examination and history – a recommendation may be made to see your MD.
- Bring back documentation from this visit with any restrictions / precautions.
- If culture returns as MRSA – we need to know ASAP.
- If culture shows that it is not a bacterial infection – no antibiotics will be issued.
- **If meds are issued – take all meds as prescribed.**
- **If ointment is prescribed – take all meds as prescribed. -Follow all other directions.**
- If you are not responding to treatment – let us know.

If you have a wound – How to care for it:

- Avoid direct contact with others until the wound is no longer draining (closed) and you been instructed by the healthcare team to resume usual activities.
- **Wash your hands frequently.**
- **Keep wound covered, and change dressing at least twice a day.**
- All disposable materials should be placed in a separate plastic bag and closed prior to being disposed of in normal household trash.
- All other materials (scissors, tweezers) and surfaces (counters, chairs) should be cleaned with alcohol, a phenol product (Lysol, Pine-sol), or a mix of bleach and water.
- Handle and launder all clothing, towels, and linens that come into contact with the wound separately from those of other people.
- **Wash clothing with HOT water, detergent, and dry clothing on the hottest setting possible.**
- **Carry and use an alcohol based hand sanitizer (higher than 50% is ideal).**

Prevention – How to:

- Hand washing is the single most important BEHAVIOR in preventing infectious disease.
- How – use warm water, wet hands and wrists, work soap into lather – wash between fingers and under nails for 15 seconds, dry using a clean – dry towel.
- If no hand washing facility is present – use an alcohol based hand sanitizer.
- Wash hands after the following: sneezing, blowing or touching your nose, before and after close contact or using the toilet, before leaving the athletic area.
- Keep hands away from groin area.
- **Do not share towels, soap, lotion, or other personal care items.**
- **Shower as soon as possible with soap after direct contact sports.**
- Wash towels, uniforms, practice gear, and any other laundry in **HOT water**, use detergent, and dry on the hottest cycle.

-For more information on Athletes & Staph Infections, see the CDC website:
<http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/community/team-hc-providers/advice-for-athletes.html>