

MRSA Information for Swimmers-Coaches-Parents

The daily news has been full of information regarding MRSA infections. As with any infection, MRSA can be very serious and deadly if left untreated, but it can generally be treated with specific antibiotic therapy. Not all skin infections have the MRSA bacteria. Arizona Swimming has compiled information from various sources including the CDC and Health Department to help you and your swimmer prevent getting a skin infection. In all cases seek medical advice from your health care practitioner if you have questions or concerns.

Staphylococcus Aureus is a bacteria that is normally on your skin. It is a problem when and if it gets into your body through a cut or other open wound. This may occur either through direct contact with a person who is a carrier or by touching an object that has been exposed to the bacteria. The site of the infection or wound begins showing signs of swelling, warmth, redness, puss-like pimple or boil. MRSA (Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus) is an advanced strain of a "staph" infection that is resistant to some antibiotics. Anyone can get MRSA. You can get MRSA the same way you can get a cold, such as by touching someone or something that has the bacteria on it and then touching your eyes, your nose or any open skin wound. Washing your hands frequently reduces your chances of getting MRSA. MRSA can live on surfaces and objects for months. However, the bacteria can be easily killed through proper cleaning methods. Most disinfectants will kill the bacteria.

There are two types of MRSA:

1. HA-MRSA, which is hospital associated, usually affects individuals with a compromised immune system.
2. CA-MRSA is community associated and can affect healthy individuals. Athletes, coaches and athletic trainers can become infected and, therefore, prevention should be a key focus.

Treatment: If you do notice a possible infected sore, do not attempt to squeeze or open the area. Keep the wound covered, unless the area is on the face. If the area does not heal or increases in size it is very important to see your doctor. The doctor then may prescribe a course of antibiotics. As with all antibiotics, it is important that individuals complete all medications prescribed by their doctor and should not resume practice/competition until the lesions are adequately healed.

The Arizona Health Department web page is an excellent source of factual information. Go to www.azdhs.gov and look in the upper right hand corner for information regarding methicillin resistant staph aureus in Arizona.

As with all infections the best course of action is prevention. See our prevention tips on the next page.

Prevention Tips

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or if none is available and alcohol based hand wash. Have alcohol based hand wash available on deck for coaches and swimmers.
- Shower well with soap before and after using a public sauna, hot tub or pool.
- Shower immediately after participating in sports or working out at the gym.
- Do not touch sores, especially ones that cannot be covered with a bandage or clothing, such as sores on your face. If you do touch a sore, wash your hands immediately.
- Shower after running and dryland exercises.
- Change towels frequently and wash towels in Hot Water and dry them on a Hot setting.
- Change underwear and socks daily and wash in hot water.
- Cover all open cuts with band-aids prior to swimming. Replace with fresh band-aids after practice.
- Do not share items such as clothing, towels, soap, razors, water bottles.
- Wear water proof sandals in the locker room/ shower area.
- Be sure shower stalls are cleaned frequently- at least daily.
- Use an antiseptic, antibacterial solution to routinely wipe down athletic equipment such as mats, weight room equipment and treatment tables between athletes..
- Wear barriers such as non-latex gloves when treating open wounds.

Conclusion

Germes are all around us and simply put "An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure."

[**Note:** This article is informative in nature and does not and should not be taken as medical advice. Specific medical questions should be referred to your Medical Provider.]