

Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)

Cases of MRSA continue to be identified. MRSA is a type of infection caused by *Staph* bacteria that is resistant to some common antibiotics such as penicillin. While most cases have involved athletes, cases involving non-athletes have also occurred. Skin infections such as abscesses and boils are the most common form of this infection. The infected area usually starts out as a small bump resembling a pimple, which becomes redder and often develops pus drainage.

Staphylococcus bacteria (or *Staph*) are commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy individuals. *Staph* and MRSA are spread by close contact either through direct physical contact (i.e. combatives or contact drills) with an infected individual or by touching objects (e.g. towels, sheets, wound dressings, clothes, hygienic razors, Kevlar, IBAs, PT belts, or sports equipment) contaminated with the bacteria.

In most cases, MRSA infections are mild and can be treated successfully with proper hygiene and the appropriate antibiotics. If left untreated, MRSA can progress to a life-threatening infection and become difficult to treat because there are fewer effective antibiotics available at this stage of the illness.

Here are a few guidelines to help prevent and control the spread of MRSA:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and warm water.
- Avoid sharing personal items (e.g., towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, or uniforms). An individual who becomes infected should wash all bed linens and clothes in hot water and laundry detergent frequently until the infection has cleared.
- Report any suspicious skin sore or boil to your primary care manager immediately.
- If you participate in sports involving close personal contact (e.g. combatives), shower with anti-bacterial soap immediately after each session.
- Non-washable gear (i.e. Kevlar, IBA, rubber duckies), should be wiped down with alcohol after each use.
- Athletic equipment such as wrestling or gymnastics mats should be wiped down regularly with an antibacterial solution.
- Individuals with an infection involving drainage (i.e. pus drainage) should be excluded from participation in training until no pus drainage is present, the infected site can be adequately covered with a bandage and clothing, and a physician's release has been obtained.
- Any cut or break in the skin should be washed with soap and water and a clean dressing applied on a daily basis.