

Handwashing is one of the best ways to prevent you from getting MRSA.

Proper handwashing is easy!

Just follow these steps:



Or... Say hello to my little friend!



Friends don't give friends MRSA.

MRSA can cause dangerous infections and it can be transmitted to you and your teammates very easily.

Remember that you can have MRSA and not know it, but you can still give it to others.

By following the steps outlined in this booklet, you can protect yourself and your team from MRSA.

For more information, please contact Dr. Scott Lajoie, Dr. Ruth Carrico or Mr. Tim Wiemken at the University of Louisville School of Public Health and Information Sciences, or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov

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Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

Get on the defense!

An athlete's guide to preventing MRSA





An MRSA skin infection often looks like a pimple or spider bite.

Source: J Am Board Fam Pract © 2004 American Board of Family Practice

What is MRSA?

MRSA is short for Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. You might also hear it called a "staph infection" or "Superbug infection". MRSA is a bacterium that is a common cause of skin infections among sick and healthy people of all ages. It is the culprit of a number of outbreaks among athletes. As the name suggests, MRSA is resistant to antibiotics, making it difficult to treat and get rid of. If left untreated, these infections can become very serious and even fatal. You can get MRSA from contact with someone who has it or by sharing personal items that they have used, such as towels or razors.

The good news is that you can easily protect yourself and your teammates from MRSA.

Four Steps to Prevention:

Follow these steps and you will be on your way to preventing the spread of MRSA.

Step 1: Communication

- Notify your trainer immediately if you have any unusual skin problems such as a boil, unusual pimple, or a pus-filled wound as these are common symptoms associated with MRSA infections.
- If you know you have MRSA, be sure to let your trainer know so the proper precautions can be taken to prevent the spread.
- Educate your teammates about MRSA. Increasing awareness of the disease is an important step in prevention.

Step 2: Personal Hygiene

- MRSA can live on your skin, even if you are healthy. This is called "colonization". Be sure to take a shower after every treatment, practice and game. This can lower the chances of you getting an infection if you are colonized.
- Wash your hands regularly and for at least 15-20 seconds. You can use soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers such as Purell. You don't need a timer for this - 20 seconds is about the length of time it takes to sing Happy Birthday twice.
- Always keep wounds securely covered with gauze and tape. Wash your hands after touching any wound or bandage.
- Wash your clothing and sheets often with warm water and bleach, if possible.

Step 3: Environmental Hygiene

- MRSA can live on all kinds of surfaces outside of your body. You can pick it up off of these surfaces and become infected or colonized. Always clean equipment such as weight benches and any other shared equipment before and after you use them.
- If cleaning products such as soap or disinfecting wipes are not available, ask your trainer or the housekeeping staff.

Step 4: Never Share Personal Items

- You can get MRSA very easily by sharing personal items such as towels, razors, bar soaps, clothing, and other personal items with anyone, regardless of how well you know them.
- Keep your personal items locked in a secure place to prevent others from using them and putting them back for you to use.

FYI:

- MRSA can survive on environmental surfaces for many days.
- MRSA can be sexually transmitted.
- The Saint Louis Rams battled an outbreak of MRSA in 2003.
- A number of college sports teams have recently dealt with MRSA outbreaks.
- MRSA can be spread through contact with infected animals such as dogs.