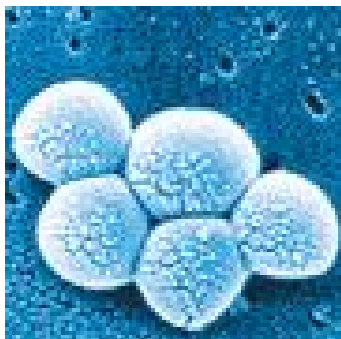


MRSA Concerns in the Athletic Environment: Recognition and Prevention



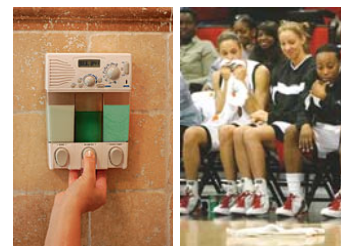
Staphylococcus aureus (Staph) are bacteria commonly found in the environment, and these bacterial may cause infections when the integrity of the skin is compromised. These bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections. Most are pimples or boils, and are treated without antibiotics. However, staph infections can cause serious infections.

Historically, most serious staph bacterial infections were treated with a certain type of antibiotic related to penicillin. In recent years, treatment of these infections has become more difficult because staph bacteria have become resistant to various antibiotics. These resistant bacteria are called **Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA**. Staph and MRSA infections are increasingly common in players of close contact sports.

The Center for Disease Control investigated clusters of community acquired MRSA skin infections and found them to be more prevalent among people in close proximity including: children, military recruits, athletes, and prisoners.

Prevention is the key! Steps to include are:

1. Ensure availability of adequate soap and hot water including for showering after practices and competitions. Encourage good hygiene among athletes;
2. Wear clean clothes to practice; and
3. No sharing personal items (towels, uniforms, or clothes)



To care for and prevent infections, the **National Athletic Trainers Association** and the **Center for Disease Control** recommend:

1. Keep hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and warm water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer routinely.
2. Encourage immediate showering following activity.
3. Avoid whirlpools or common tubs with open wounds, scrapes or scratches.
4. Avoid sharing towels, razors, and daily athletic gear.
5. Properly wash athletic gear and towels after each use.
6. Maintain clean facilities and equipment.
7. Inform or refer to appropriate health care personnel for all active skin lesions and lesions that do not respond to initial therapy.
8. Administer or seek proper first aid.
9. Encourage health care personnel to seek bacterial cultures to establish a diagnosis.
10. Care and cover skin lesions appropriately before participation.



You can prevent staph or MRSA infections by practicing good hygiene! **Recognize wounds that are potentially infected and report skin lesions to your Athletic Trainer immediately.**