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California Interscholastic Federation

SPORTS MEDICINE ALERT

*Prepared by the State CIF Sports Medicine Committee
for distribution to Coaches, Athletic Directors and
Administrators*

MRSA

MRSA (methicillin-resistant staph aureus) is a type of staph infection that is resistant to many common antibiotics and, in cases where treatment is needed, can be very difficult to treat. Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections in the United States. Most of these skin infections are minor (such as pimples and boils) and can be treated without antibiotics, but occasionally serious infections require treatment. In the last few years, there have been a number of cases where these bacteria have spread among members of sports teams. Recently, this issue is making headlines as MRSA can have serious and deadly ramifications if not dealt with immediately.

WARNING SIGNS

It is common for athletes to have pimples, cuts and abrasion on their skin. Coaches must be aware of the signs and symptoms that their student-athletes may exhibit.

- Unusual or increasing pain and/or warmth
- The presence of pus or a pustule
- Induration (hardness)
- Increasing swelling, size or redness of the wound
- Red streaks around the wound
- Fever and/or chills (flu-like symptoms)



If you have any of these signs or symptoms, seek medical attention immediately.

Preventing MRSA

Precaution that coaches should take for preventing the spread of MRSA

- **Insist that your athletes shower with soap as soon as possible after practices and competitions. If MRSA bacteria are present on your skin, you can wash them away before they have a chance to cause infection.**
- **Ensure that athletes do not share equipment, clothing, towels and other personal items. Implement a NO-SHARING rule if you have not done so already.**
- **Whether your athletic department launders practice and game uniforms or athletes do it themselves, implement a policy that uniforms (practice and game) get washed after EACH use.**
- **Ensure that all wounds, cuts and abrasions are covered to help prevent infection, especially during practice and completion.**
- **Equipment MUST be stored in clean, dry areas. A dark, moist, warm environment (lockers) is perfect for bacteria growth.**
- **Clean and disinfect daily, surfaces that are touched on a regular basis. This includes benches, training room tables, weight room equipment and benches.**
- **Wrestling mats MUST be cleaned DAILY before and after use. This would include use by physical education classes.**
- **Research is inconclusive on whether athletic fields can harbor MRSA bacteria. Since some studies have shown that the possibility exists, there are companies that offer antimicrobial treatments for athlete fields.**

For more information go to www.cifstate.org and click on the 'Health and Safety' box at the top of the page. Open the Sports Medicine Handbook and refer to page 44 for practical health hygiene policies and rec

