

INFECTION CONTROL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL ATHLETIC PROGRAMS

General information

Students participating in school athletic programs may have increased risk of infection because of skin-to-skin contact or through the sharing of water bottles, athletic equipment, or towels. To minimize the risk of infection:

- Exclude athletes with non-intact skin (e.g., boils, sores, cuts, etc.) from competition or practice until evaluated by a health care provider.
- Exclude athletes with head lice from activities where there is head-to-head contact or headgear is used until they are treated.
- Ensure that all athletes have their own water bottles and discourage the sharing of water bottles.
- Provide clean towels for athletes during practice and competition to minimize contact with the saliva and secretions of others.
- Encourage all persons to wear shower shoes, sandals, or flip-flops in the shower or the locker room to prevent the spread of fungal infections (athlete's foot) and plantar warts.
- Inform athletes that items such as toothbrushes, razors, and nail clippers might be contaminated with blood and should not be shared.
- Cover breaks in skin with a water-proof bandage. Change bandage if it gets wet.
- Have athletes shower after every practice/game. Do not share towels.

Possible blood exposure

Participation in sports may result in injuries in which bleeding occurs. The following recommendations have been made for sports in which direct body contact occurs or in which an athlete's blood or other body fluids visibly tinged with blood may contaminate the skin or mucous membranes of other participants or staff:

- Have athletes cover existing cuts, abrasions, wounds, or other areas of broken skin with an occlusive dressing (one that covers the wound and contains drainage) before and during practice and/or competition. Caregivers should cover their own non-intact skin to prevent spread of infection to or from an injured athlete.
- Wear disposable gloves to avoid contact with blood or other body fluids visibly tinged with blood and any object such as equipment, bandages, or uniforms contaminated with these fluids. Hands should be thoroughly cleaned with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub as soon as possible after gloves are removed.
- Remove athletes with active bleeding from competition as soon as possible and until the bleeding has stopped. Wounds should be cleaned with soap and water. Skin antiseptics may be used if soap and water are not available. Wounds must be covered with an occlusive dressing that remains intact during further play before athletes return to competition.
- Advise athletes to report injuries and wounds as soon as possible, including those that occur before or during competition.

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- Clean and cover minor cuts or abrasions that are not bleeding or draining during scheduled breaks; this does not require interruption of play. However, if an athlete's equipment or uniform fabric is wet with blood, the uniform should be removed and replaced and the equipment should be cleaned and disinfected or replaced.
- Clean equipment and playing areas contaminated with blood until all visible blood is gone. Then disinfect with an EPA-approved disinfectant* (viricidal, bactericidal, fungicidal) or make a bleach solution (¼ cup bleach to 1 gallon of water). If using the bleach solution, apply to the surface or area. Do not rinse. Air dry. The disinfected area should be in contact with the bleach solution for at least 1 minute.

* EPA-approved disinfectants must be used according to the manufacturer recommendations.

- Have access to a well-equipped first aid kit during any adult-supervised athletic event. This includes personal protective equipment for first aid responders.
- Do not delay emergency care because gloves or other protective equipment are not available. If the caregiver does not have the appropriate protective equipment, a towel may be used to cover the wound until an off-the-field location is reached where gloves can be used during the medical examination and treatment.
- Follow current CPR guidelines.
- Train equipment handlers, laundry personnel, and janitorial staff in proper procedures for handling washable or disposable materials contaminated with blood. Staff should always wear gloves when handling items contaminated with blood.

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230, your local health department, or the Minnesota Department of Health at (651) 201-5414.

