



SKIN INFECTIONS IN SPORT



Ollan Cassell (#13), 1964 Olympic Trials

Background of Skin Infections

Competitive sports, contact sports in particular, put athletes at an increased risk to develop skin infections. The three types of skin infections are fungal, viral, and bacterial. Skin trauma, increased stress levels, and frequent skin-to-skin contact are a few risks that contribute to athletes contracting a skin infection. Implementing prevention strategies, early diagnosis & treatment and athlete education are essential in preventing the spread of skin infections.

Transmission of Skin Disease

The most common methods of skin disease transmission are:

Direct- skin to skin contact

Indirect- skin to infected surface (i.e. dirty mat, dirty towel, dirty treatment table, etc...)

TYPES OF SKIN INFECTIONS & TRAINING RESTRICTIONS

- **FUNGAL INFECTIONS (I.E. RINGWORM)**
 - TYPICALLY ENTERS THE BODY THROUGH AN OPEN WOUND AND THRIVE IN WARM, MOIST ENVIRONMENTS.
 - LESIONS ARE RED AND SCALEY ON EXAM; CAN BE COVERED FOR PRACTICES.
 - MOST COMMONLY TREATED WITH TOPICAL ANTIFUNGAL OINTMENT.

- **VIRAL INFECTIONS**
 - HERPES SIMPLEX IS MOST COMMON FORM.
 - CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO STRESS, ILLNESS, OR RECURRENT OUTBREAK.
 - COMMON S&S ARE TINGLING OR ITCHING AROUND THE LESION.
 - INFECTIONS ARE HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS.
 - RETURN TO PLAY CRITERIA: NO NEW LESIONS FOR 72HRS, COMPLETED A 5 DAY COURSE OF ANTIVIRAL MEDICATION, AND CURRENT LESIONS HAVE FORMED A FIRM CRUST.

- **BACTERIAL INFECTIONS (I.E. MRSA, IMPETIGO)**
 - INFECTIONS PRESENT IN A VARIETY OF WAYS; SUCH AS AN "INSECT BITE" OR LESIONS SEEPING YELLOW, "HONEY" FLUID.
 - TREATMENT DETERMINED BY CLINICAL EXAM, WOUND CULTURE, AND/OR BACTERIAL SENSITIVITY.
 - RETURN TO PLAY CRITERIA: AT LEAST 72HRS OF ANTIBIOTICS, NO DRAINAGE OR NEW LESIONS.



RISK FACTOR FOR SKIN DISEASES

- UNCOVERED OPEN WOUNDS
- STRESS
- ILLNESS
- SHARING TOWELS OR BARS OF SOAP
- PREVIOUS INFECTION
- RE-WEARING DIRTY CLOTHES
- DIRTY EQUIPMENT

EDUCATING ATHLETES

Just like other transmittable diseases, education is important to prevent the spread of skin infections.

Make sure all those working with your teams are aware of the infection-control policy.

The infection-control policy should include, but not limited to, proper hand washing, effective personal hygiene habits, proper medical and sport facility cleanings.

Fact Callout

Good personal hygiene decreases the colonization of bacteria and can be the first line of defense against transmission of infectious agents.

PREVENTING SKIN DISEASE

- Good personal hygiene
 - Use antimicrobial liquid soap after sports practice.
 - Avoid cosmetic shaving.
 - Washing hands with antimicrobial soap for at least 15 seconds, and rinsing the hands with warm water.
 - Avoid sharing towels, razors, water bottles, and bars of soap.
 - Washing dirty practice clothes, braces, sleeves, etc. daily.
 - All open wounds and abrasions should be covered with a semi-occlusive or occlusive dressing.
 - Daily or weekly skin checks of susceptible athletes, if required.

See Sports Medicine early for treatment if you suspect an outbreak.

Herpes Simplex
(Viral)



Impetigo
(Bacterial)



MRSA
(Bacterial)



Tinea Corporis
(Fungal)



Tinea Pedis
(Fungal)

