

Skin Infections in Athletes

Skin infections can be passed between athletes by:

- Direct skin-to-skin contact
- Sharing sports equipment, clothes, and towels

The three most important skin infections are:

Staphylococcus aureus “Staph”

- **Caused by:** bacteria
- **Typically:** one or more painful sores, with pus surrounded by redness, sometimes associated with fever



Herpes

- **Caused by:** virus, the same virus that causes cold sores in the mouth
- **Typically:** one or more painful blisters with clear fluid surrounded by redness



Tinea “Ringworm”

- **Caused by:** fungus
- **Typically:** itchy, dry, red, circular patches



Skin infections can lead to:

- Lost playing time
- Scarring, sometimes on face
- Wounds or rashes that keep coming back
- Rarely, serious life-threatening infections if not treated quickly

Prevent skin infections:

Wash hands



Clean hands often with soap and water. Use alcohol hand rub if soap is not available and hands do not look dirty.

Shower



Shower on site immediately after every practice and game. Use soap and warm water. Do not share towels.

Cover wounds



Cover all breaks in skin with a water proof bandage. Change the bandage if it gets wet.

Wash clothes



Wash clothes and towels after every practice and game. Use detergent and dry thoroughly.

Get it checked out. Don't wait.

- Report any skin problems to your athletic trainer, school nurse, coach, or health care provider
- Tell your health care provider you participate in competitive sports
- Check with league rules if you have questions about participation

For more information see: www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/athlete/