

UHSAA Memo



Date: January 14, 2010

To: All Principals, Athletic Directors, Trainers, Wrestling Coaches and Referees

From: Bart Thompson, UHSAA Assistant Director

RE: MRSA

The UHSAA has received notice that a wrestler from a Utah high school has been found to have a confirmed case of MRSA. The notice came from the student's parent. The infection was initially discovered about January 1. The last competition in which this student competed prior to discovering the infection was a tournament held December 18-19, 2009. It is possible the infection was contracted at that tournament. The student sought medical attention and was cleared to wrestle and competed in another tournament on January 8, 2010. During this tournament the condition worsened forming a boil like lesion. The student discontinued his participation in the tournament and sought additional medical attention. Treatment was provided and a culture taken which was confirmed as MRSA January 13, 2010.

The number of schools competing in both tournaments as well as the number of schools with which those schools have competed has resulted in nearly every wrestling school in the state having either primary or secondary contact with the infection. Even if a school has not had primary or secondary contact with this case, the likelihood of exposure due to the nature of wrestling competition is high.

Steps must be taken to prevent the spread of the infection. It is imperative that wrestlers follow proper hygiene. It is also critical that coaches, trainers and skin inspection officials are extra careful in skin inspections at weigh-ins prior to all competitions. Medical clearance to participate on the approved UHSAA/NFHS release form should be required for suspicious conditions and carefully checked that they are current and that a student is not competing prior to the allowed date listed by the medical provider on the form. The form is available on both the "Wrestling" and "Forms" pages of the UHSAA web-site and at this link: <http://www.uhsaa.org/info/images/forms/skinform.pdf> Periodic inspections by coaches or trainers of their team members are also valuable. Scratches, abrasions or other wounds are easily infected and should be monitored closely with steps taken to prevent their possible infection.

Early detection and treatment generally result in a much quicker resolution and earlier return of a student athlete to participation. It is also an important prevention technique in the spread of an infection to other team members. Regular cleaning and disinfection of surfaces that come in contact with skin, particularly wrestling mats is also essential.

Staph skin infections, including MRSA, generally start as small red bumps that resemble pimples, boils or spider bites. These can quickly turn into deep, painful abscesses that

require surgical draining. Sometimes the bacteria remain confined to the skin, but they can also penetrate into the body, causing potentially life-threatening infections in bones, joints, surgical wounds, the bloodstream, heart valves and lungs.

MRSA infection is caused by *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria — often called "staph." MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. It's a strain of staph that is resistant to the broad-spectrum antibiotics commonly used to treat it. MRSA can be fatal.

Because MRSA is resistant to treatment by many typical antibiotics, time to resolve the issue may be longer than other common conditions. Prevention, early detection and treatment are vital in avoiding the disappointment of a student athlete not being able to compete in the season culminating events due to an infection.

Much good information is available regarding MRSA on the internet. Doing an internet search using "MRSA" will yield many good sites with valuable information. The following is the link to the National Wrestling Coaches Association webinar regarding the prevention of skin infections in wrestlers. It was part of the rules clinic a year ago and is great information to share with students, parents and anyone who needs to be included in efforts to reduce the spread of infections in student/athletes.

<http://www.nwcaskinprevention.com/webinar>

The following is a link to the section of the NFHS web-site that has links to position statements by the Sports Medicine Advisory Committee. These statements, particularly the one regarding MRSA also provide valuable information.

<http://www.nfhs.org/content.aspx?id=3325>

We do not have an outbreak at this time. We do have the potential for one. This notice is to aid in the prevention of one and to aid in the prevention of the necessity to disqualify a student athlete from competition due to a communicable skin condition.

Good luck to all of you and your teams.

