

**Official Statement from the National Athletic Trainers' Association
on Communicable and Infectious Diseases in Secondary School Sports**

The National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) recommends that health care professionals and participants in secondary school athletics take the proper precautions to prevent the spread of communicable and infectious diseases.

Due to the nature of competitive sports at the high school level, there is increased risk for the spread of infectious diseases, such as impetigo, community acquired methicillin-resistant staphylococcus infection (MRSA) and herpes gladiatorum (a form of herpes virus that causes lesions on the head, neck and shoulders). These diseases are spread by skin-to-skin contact and infected equipment shared by athletes, generally causing lesions of the skin. The following are suggestions from NATA to prevent the spread of infectious and communicable diseases:

- Immediately shower after practice or competition*
- Wash all athletic clothing worn during practice or competition daily*
- Clean and disinfect gym bags and/or travel bags if the athlete is carrying dirty workout gear home to be washed and then bringing clean gear back to school in the same bag. This problem can also be prevented by using disposable bags for practice laundry.*
- Wash athletic gear (such as knee or elbow pads) periodically and hang to dry*
- Clean and disinfect protective equipment such as helmets, shoulder pads, catcher's equipment and hockey goalie equipment on a regular basis*
- Do not share towels or personal hygiene products with others*
- All skin lesions should be covered before practice or competition to prevent risk of infection to the wound and transmission of illness to other participants. Only skin infections that have been properly diagnosed and treated may be covered to allow participation of any kind*
- All new skin lesions occurring during practice or competition should be properly diagnosed and treated immediately.*
- Playing fields should be inspected regularly for animal droppings that could cause bacterial infections of cuts or abrasions*
- Athletic lockers should be sanitized between seasons*
- Rather than carpeting, locker or dressing rooms should have tile floors that may be cleaned and sanitized*
- Weight room equipment, including benches, bars and handles should be cleaned and sanitized daily*

*National Athletic Trainers' Association
3-07*