



Sports Hygiene – Guidelines to Minimize Infectious Diseases **Position Statement and Guidelines**

National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) **Sports Medicine Advisory Committee**

Preparation for competition in any sport requires proper training and practice. Whether it means preparing your body or maintaining your equipment, proper preparation is necessary. Keeping your body and equipment clean is part of that process. Infectious diseases do propagate and are easily transmitted in the sports environment. Contact sports and those with heavy amounts of equipment are more prone than others, but needless to say, proper hygiene is necessary in all sports to reduce the potential of transmitting these agents. The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee realizes these issues and has helped establish guidelines to educate the sporting and medical community about their presence and means to reduce transmission of sports related infectious diseases.

Proper Hygienic Practices

1. Shower immediately after each practice or competition. Use your own bottled soap and towel and don't share them with others, let alone other toiletries. Studies have shown that transmission of infectious diseases can occur when these items are shared with other athletes.
2. Don't share water bottles. Viruses and bacterial infections can be easily transmitted via a shared bottle.
3. Don't perform cosmetic shaving. Needless shaving of the chest or legs or genital areas have been associated with increased outbreaks of Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcal aureus (MRSA). Consider cropping or closely trimming the areas if necessary.
4. Wash equipment on a routine basis. Work-out clothing after each practice. Consider washing smaller pads (for knees or elbows) on a weekly basis or if soiled with contaminated material, each day. Larger pads, such as those in Hockey or Football, should be disinfected (1:100 solution of household bleach and water) on a routine basis. More frequently if soiled with blood or

bodily fluids. Commercial equipment utilizing detergents or ozone for decontamination could also be considered.

5. Don't let abrasions or open sores go without evaluation by your coach or Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC). Be sure to keep them clean and covered with proper dressings.

6. Inform your coach or ATC about any suspicious lesion at the beginning of practice. Consider withdrawal from practice or competition until the lesion is evaluated by your Health Care Provider (HCP). If it is considered infectious, wait to return to competition until it has cleared by your HCP. Also have other team mates evaluated for such lesions and cared for in the same manner.

7. Don't use a whirlpool or cold tub with any open wounds, scrapes or scratches.

8. Shower before using whirlpools or common tubs.

Sports Hygiene

Hygienic guidelines that will help reduce being sidelined:

- Shower after practice/competition
- Don't share water bottles
- Don't perform cosmetic shaving
- Wash workout clothing daily and equipment routinely
- Properly cover all abrasions and open sores
- Have all suspicious lesions evaluated before practice or competition
- Shower before using whirlpools or cold tubs
- Refrain from using whirlpools or cold tubs with any open sores, scratches or scrapes

Following these guidelines will help reduce the occurrences and outbreaks of infectious diseases. This will take an active participation of the coach, parent and athlete. Together this will create a healthy environment that will allow the athlete compete and reduce the risk of being sidelined.

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