

**MRSA**, spoken in the medical community as “*mursa*”, stands for **methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus**. This is a bacteria named for its resistance to a commonly used antibiotic. Over the last 10 years, approximately, there has been a heightened concern about the spread of this bacteria due to its ability to cause aggressive and in some cases immediately dangerous infections. In most cases it is a very treatable problem, but a serious concern none the less.

MRSA has become perhaps an even bigger concern in sports due to the close proximity and contact of athletes and the fact that MRSA is easily spread skin to skin. This bacteria lives on the skin of many people, as well as under their nails, and in their nose. In our area, the number of people carrying this bacteria is around 40%. Though the bacteria is present, it may not cause any problems making individuals completely unaware.

If this bacteria were to cause an infection, it is usually a skin infection that leads to sores or “boils” that are very red and painful. They can be small as a pencil eraser or get as large as an orange. If you see something like this, have it immediately addressed by a medical professional such as a certified athletic trainer or physician. The infection may respond to cleaning, warm compresses, and oral antibiotics, but in some cases, requires drainage by a physician. If these minor infections are not addressed, more concerning problems may arise such as bacteria getting into the bloodstream. This is referred to as sepsis and is a very dangerous condition that requires immediate attention in a hospital setting with IV antibiotics and other treatments.

The medical staff works diligently to make sure all equipment is cleaned and athletes have proper hygiene to avoid these infections and other infections. Athletes should **shower before and after each athletic event with antibacterial soaps and keep all of their equipment clean at all times** to prevent these and other infections. **Outbreaks are a potential reality!** We need everyone’s help to make sure they are prevented!