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 waterproof 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/