



County of Erie

CHRIS COLLINS
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

ANTHONY J. BILLITTIER IV, M.D., FACEP
COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

HEALTH ADVISORY # 279a

February 11, 2011

Skin Infections in Local High School Wrestlers

Please distribute to High School Superintendents

Please distribute to School Physicians, School Nurses, Athletic Directors, Coaches, and Athletic Trainers

Summary

- The Erie and Niagara County Departments of Health, in cooperation with the New York State Department of Health, are investigating several cases of skin infection in high school wrestlers.
- Affected wrestlers participated in a high school wrestling tournament at Starpoint High School on Friday, February 4, 2011 and Saturday, February 5, 2011.
- Varsity and Junior Varsity wrestlers from several area high schools participated in the tournament.
- Health care providers, school physicians, coaches, trainers, and referees are advised to be vigilant in examining and treating wrestlers with suspected skin infections.
- Skin infections that are commonly diagnosed among athletes include: *Herpes gladiatorum*, *Staphylococcus aureus* (Staph) including Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), and tinea (ringworm).

Background

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), the Niagara County Department of Health (NCDOH) and the Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) are currently investigating several cases of skin infection in high school wrestlers who participated in a tournament at Starpoint High School on February 4th-5th, 2011. Many of these skin infections are highly transmissible; therefore, secondary transmission following the February 4th and 5th

meet is possible during subsequent matches and should be considered as points for further transmission.

Varsity and Junior Varsity wrestlers from Starpoint High School and the following high schools in Erie County participated in the tournament: Lakeshore, Williamsville East, Williamsville South, Hamburg, Sweethome, West Seneca East, Iroquois, Kenmore East, Grand Island and Amherst.

The high school wrestling season is at its peak with upcoming sectional and state championship meets scheduled.

Communication from the New York State Public High School Athletic Association

The New York State Public High School Athletic Association, after discussions with the NYSDOH, ECDOH and NCDOH, has notified participating school district athletic directors regarding the diagnosis of skin infections among wrestlers who participated in the February 4th-5th, 2011 wrestling meet at Starpoint High School.

The NYSPHSAA **strongly recommends** the following:

All wrestlers that are still practicing and competing have an appropriate health care provider perform a skin and body check prior to their next competition.

The appropriate health care provider should look for all skin irregularities that could potentially be a skin infection and inquire about symptoms that are consistent with potential skin infections (i.e. MRSA, Herpes Gladiatorum, Impetigo, Chicken Pox, and Ring Worm).

NYSPHSAA also encouraged Member Schools to take the following precautions to prevent the contraction and spread of any skin infection:

- Shower with antibacterial and antifungal soap and hot water after every practice and competition.
- Establish procedures to clean and disinfect environmental surfaces.
- Maintain proper ventilation and lighting in the wrestling room.
- Wash all clothing after every use, and gym bags on a regular basis.
- Follow good wound management.
- Promote health over competition.

Additional Recommendations from the ECDOH

School healthcare providers are requested to thoroughly examine all wrestlers prior to their competition, especially those who present with or report the presence of skin rashes or lesions. Wrestlers needing further evaluations should be directed to their personal healthcare providers.

Due to the direct skin to skin contact that occurs during wrestling matches, the potential for transmission of pathogens between wrestlers is significant. Appropriate diagnosis and treatment, along with exclusion from participation while skin infections are present is critical for interrupting disease transmission.

Common skin infections that affect wrestlers and other athletes with skin to skin contact include: *Herpes gladiatorum*, *Staphylococcus aureus* (Staph) including Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), and tinea (ringworm) amongst others.

Additional information on skin infections among athletes can be found in the following locations:

- *Herpes gladiatorum* (“Mat Herpes”): http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/athletic_skin_infections/herpes.htm
- Skin infections in athletes: http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/athletic_skin_infections/for_more_info.htm

Because many skin infections may look similar, healthcare providers are encouraged to utilize available diagnostic procedures for differentiating causal agents when clinically relevant.

Reporting

Schools and healthcare providers are asked to contact the ECDOH Disease Control Office at 716-858-7697 to report cases of skin infection diagnosed among high school wrestlers who participated in the February 4th-5th, 2011 wrestling meet at Starpoint High School and those who participate in upcoming matches.

As always, outbreaks or clusters of skin infections or other illness should be reported as soon as they are identified.

Environmental Cleaning Guidance

Environmental cleaning guidance can be found at:

http://www2.erie.gov/health/sites/www2.erie.gov.health/files/uploads/pdfs/guidelines_MRSA_school.pdf

Questions

If you have any questions regarding skin infections among high school wrestlers or other athletes, please contact the ECDOH Communicable Disease Control Office at 716-858-7697.

Additional information

New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA): www.nysphsaa.org

Health Category Definitions:

Health Alert FLASH: conveys the highest level of importance due to a large-scale, catastrophic public health emergency; warrants immediate action or attention

Health Alert Priority: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention to a health problem or situation

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary

The ECDOH Health Alert & Advisory System is an e-mail notification system designed to alert community partners about important health related information. **You can sign up to receive alerts & advisories at www.erie.gov/health/services/health_professionals.asp.**

The Erie County Department of Health does not provide medical advice. The information provided herein and on the Erie County Department of Health website is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your personal physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition or issue. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of the content found on the Erie County Department of Health website or this correspondence.