

## Guidance for athletic programs with herpes gladiatorum

Herpes gladiatorum (mat herpes) is a skin infection caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV-1). This skin infection is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact. Wrestlers with herpes gladiatorum lesions may spread this infection to other athletes. All athletes with skin sores or lesions should be referred to a physician or primary care provider for evaluation and possible treatment. Generally, lesions (sores) appear within 8 days after exposure to an infected person, but in some cases it may take longer to appear. Wrestlers with herpes or other skin lesions should not participate in wrestling practice or play.

Before skin lesions appear, some people have a sore throat, swollen lymph nodes, fever or tingling on the skin. Herpes gladiatorum lesions appear as a cluster of blisters and may be on the face, arms, legs or trunk. Seek medical care immediately for lesions in or around the eye. Every wrestler should be evaluated by a knowledgeable, unbiased adult for the presence of a rash and excluded from practice and competition if suspicious rashes are present until evaluation and clearance by a competent medical professional.

There is a reservoir of HSV-1 in the community. It is the same virus that causes cold sores (fever blisters). Once a person is infected, the virus will be present. Just as with cold sores, reoccurrences of mat herpes may occur. Any reoccurrences are as potentially infectious as the initial outbreak. Therefore, withholding exposed (not infected) players has limited potential to stop the spread of the virus.

However, there are measures that everyone can take to prevent this illness:

- Shower at school immediately after practice, using soap and water.
- Always use your own plastic bottle of liquid soap.
- Practice and competition gear should be cleaned every day.
- Headgear should be cleaned daily with a bleach wipe or any other cleaning material.
- Clean towels should always be used.
- Hands should be cleaned often! At least 15 seconds washing should be done using soap and warm water. An alcohol-based hand rub can be used instead of soap if their hands are not visibly soiled.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with your hands.
- Clean your hands before and after practice and competitions.
- Never pick or squeeze skin sores; drainage is very infectious.
- Always report any skin lesions or sores to your athletic trainer or coaching staff immediately, whom in turn should notify teams that they have wrestled in the 8 days prior to an outbreak of herpes gladiatorum and notify/consult with their school physician immediately so that a treatment plan can be started.
- Use your own soap and towel.
- Wash your towel after each use, using hot water with detergent (and bleach if possible); and dry on high heat setting.

Cleaning and disinfecting the environment is also important in preventing infection with herpes gladiatorum. Disinfectants approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) must be used according to manufacturer recommendations (viricidal, fungicidal, bactericidal) OR bleach solution (800 ppm = ¼ c bleach: 1 gallon water). Mix daily to be effective. Mats should be washed after every practice session or competition. Locker rooms and shower areas should be cleaned and disinfected daily using EPA-approved product or bleach solution. Mop heads and cleaning cloths should be laundered daily using laundry detergent, hot water and dry on high heat setting. All facilities should be cleaned daily with an appropriate cleaning agent. This includes locker room, practice room, mats and weight room.