

Twelve Steps to Avoid Staph Infections on the Team and in the Hospital

Professional athletes are contracting MRSA on the field, in the gym, and after orthopedic surgery. MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, a type of drug-resistant bacteria. The following steps will help players avoid two types of infections: community-acquired MRSA, which can be picked up from sports equipment and other athletes, and hospital-acquired MRSA, a slightly different germ that is commonly found in hospitals.

Steps to Avoid Community-Acquired MRSA

1 Shower often and keep your hands clean. MRSA bacteria can live on uniforms, equipment and locker room surfaces for more than 60 days. Avoid sharing clothes, towels, razors, bars of soap, and other personal items.

2 Make sure that any cut or abrasion is cleaned and bandaged right away. Any opening in the skin is a welcome mat for community-acquired MRSA.

3 If you play a contact sport or someone on your team has a MRSA infection, get tested for the MRSA germ. The test is a noninvasive swab of your skin or nasal passages.

4 If you test positive for the germ, you can rid yourself of it easily, before it gets inside your body to cause an infection. Bathe daily for three to five days with chlorhexidine soap. You can buy this liquid soap without a prescription. Your doctor may also suggest you put an antibiotic cream called mupirocin in your nose, where MRSA bacteria tend to live.

5 It is important to disinfect locker rooms and workout equipment with bleach. Team managers should also investigate anti-microbial coatings for use on equipment, uniforms, and other surfaces.



Steps to Avoid Hospital-Acquired MRSA

6 Ask that hospital staff clean their hands before treating you. This is the single most important way to protect yourself in the hospital, so don't worry about being too aggressive. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are more effective at removing most bacteria than soap and water. Say, "Excuse me, but there's an alcohol dispenser right there. Would you mind using that before you touch me, so I can see it?" Don't be falsely assured by gloves. If caregivers have pulled on gloves without cleaning their hands first, the gloves are already contaminated before they touch you.

7 If you need surgery, choose a surgeon with a low infection rate. Surgeons know their rate of infection for various procedures. Don't be afraid to ask.

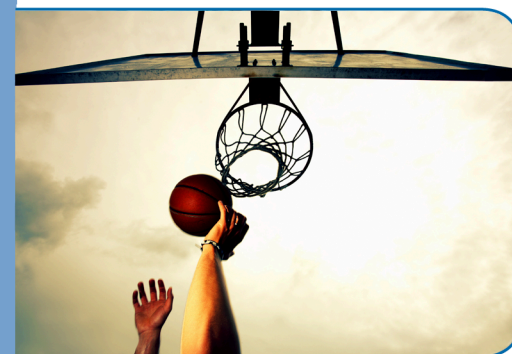
8 Beginning three to five days before surgery, shower or bathe daily with chlorhexidine soap. It will help remove any dangerous bacteria you may be carrying on your own skin.

9 Ask your surgeon to have you tested for methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) at least one week before coming to the hospital. The test is simple, usually just a nasal swab. If you have MRSA, extra precautions can be taken to protect you from infection.

10 On the day of your operation, remind your doctor that you may need an antibiotic one hour before the first incision. For many types of surgery, a pre-surgical antibiotic is the standard of care, but it is often overlooked by hospital staff.

11 Do not shave the surgical site. Razors can create small nicks in the skin through which bacteria can enter. If hair must be removed, ask that clippers be used instead of a razor.

12 Avoid a urinary tract catheter, if possible. It is a common cause of infection. If you have a catheter, ask if it's time to remove it. The tube is hidden under your sheet, where it's often left in too long.



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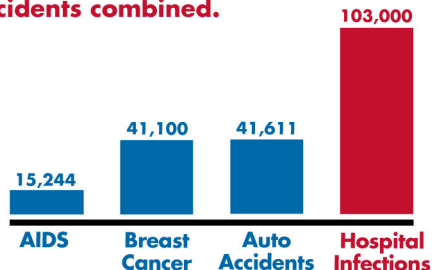
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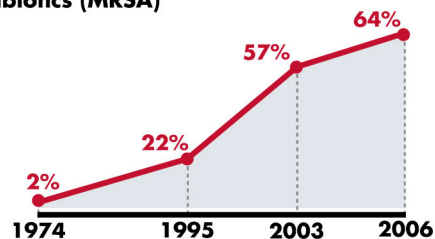
Facts About Infection:

Infections kill more people in the U.S. than AIDS, breast cancer, and auto accidents combined.



Staph infections are becoming increasingly resistant to a broad range of antibiotics.

% of staph infections that are resistant to antibiotics (MRSA)



Please read and use these lifesaving 12 Steps. For more information, visit www.hospitalinfection.org
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REDUCE
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12 STEPS
athletes can take to avoid getting sidelined by infection



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