

The following strategies are suggested to help reduce the risk of an outbreak of skin infections in wrestlers. This summary is based upon the natural history of the most common causes of viral and bacterial infections that can occur during a wrestling season.

In addition to the performance of frequent skin checks before wrestling practice and before EVERY competition there are additional methods that can be utilized to reduce the number of skin infections in wrestlers.

There are a number of products on the market that claim to reduce the acquisition of infections in wrestlers. These products have not been shown to have greater efficacy than soap and water.

A recent article in the Journal of Athletic Training provided an analysis of infections in NCAA men's wrestling.

1. 22% of the infections were recurrent. This provides an opportunity for prevention as any wrestler or coach with a history of herpes gladiatorum should be aware of the option of season long prophylaxis with anti-viral medication.
2. 40% of the infections were due to Herpes Simplex type 1. 26% of the infections were bacterial and 21% were fungal infections.
3. In this analysis 65% of the infections occurred in a small number of the teams that were monitored. In other words the infections occur in clusters. In order to reduce the chances of this occurring with one of our high school wrestling teams the following protocol is suggested when a confirmed or suspected case of herpes gladiatorum is identified.
  - a. Exposure or identification of a confirmed or suspected case of Herpes Gladiatorum. Isolate all training partners who have had contact with the index case for 3 days before the onset of the rash. Any contact up to 3 days before the vesicle formation indicates an exposure. This is due to the possibility of asymptomatic viral shedding that can occur before the development of the symptoms or a rash. The wrestler(s) should be isolated for 8 days and receive daily skin checks. The incubation period for herpes gladiatorum is 2-12 days. 90 % of exposed wrestlers will develop signs and symptoms of the infection within 8 days. Teammates and competitors that are exposed can be informed about the potential for post exposure prophylaxis with antiviral medication.
  - b. If a second case occurs in a different weight class on the same team you should strongly consider canceling future competition and isolate the team from contact for 8 days. In addition the option for post exposure prophylaxis with anti-viral medication can be discussed.

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*Epidemiology of Skin Infections in Men's Wrestling: Analysis of 2009-2010 Through 2013-2014 NCAA Surveillance Data*

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