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Infection from Staph Bacteria: Should You Be Concerned?

What is MRSA?

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a strain of staph bacteria that is resistant to commonly used antibiotics like methicillin. Staph bacteria are pathogens that live in the skin of 30% of the population. When the bacteria enter the body, it can cause mild effects like skin infections. However, when the bacteria enter the bloodstream, the effect can be fatal in as few as 72 hours, and causes pneumonia, internal organ infections, and toxic shock syndrome.

Where does the bacteria live?

Though staff lives in the skin of 30% of the population, it can also survive on inorganic hosts such as playgrounds, in hospitals, prisons, and health clubs for an extended amount of time. It is accepted that athletic locker rooms, whirlpools, towels, uniforms, mats, and other athletic equipment provide a prime breeding ground for the bacteria, particularly as these locations are often associated with perspiration and shared contact among individuals. Recently, it has been heavily debated as to whether or not synthetic turf fields fall into this category as well.

Synthetic Turf Fields as a Breeding Ground for MRSA?

Though there is much contention on

this issue, the fact is that fields, synthetic or not, are host to the exchange of all types of bodily fluids. Sweat, blood, urine, vomit, and spit all abound on the playing field and are all excellent sources from which bacteria can be spread. Increasing the risk factor is the high level of contact occurring on the field, encouraging both the exchange of these fluids as well as possible injury to result in an entrance path for the bacteria to the bloodstream. These risks are present on both artificial and regular turf, and until more research is done there is no clear verdict as to whether synthetic fields pose increased danger for staph infections. One fact to consider is that players with turf burns (an injury that can be sustained from synthetic turf) are seven times more likely to become infected than those without burns as the burn provides an easy entry point for the bacteria on the field or in the locker room. Our expectation is that there will be more research available on this important topic in the future.

What to Do?

To avoid infection, the best action to take is to try to prevent the spread of bacteria by:

- o Always washing hands with soap and water
- o Keeping abrasions and cuts clean and covered
- o Avoiding contact with other people's wounds
- o Avoiding sharing personal items like uniforms, razors and towels
- o Regularly cleaning shared equipment with disinfectants
- o Regularly cleaning synthetic turf with an antimicrobial treatment

Credit: MRSA and synthetic fields: more research is in in October 2007 STMA Magazine. For more information on this subject, visit www.athleticturf.net or feel free to contact CampusCare® at 508-668-7490, (toll free) 866-543-4333 or sales@campuscare.com

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