

Precautions Regarding Communicable Infections in Wrestling

The potential dangers of communicable staph and skin infections have long been a concern in the sport of wrestling, primarily because of the amount of physical contact involved. Fundamental precautions can significantly reduce the potential for contracting a communicable staph or skin infection. In wrestling, these fundamental precautions can be effectively separated into five categories:

1. National Federation of High School (NFHS) Rules

- NFHS regulations require that all wrestlers weigh in for a match or tournament “wearing no more than a suitable undergarment.” A primary reason for this rule is that wrestlers’ bodies can be assessed by the weigh in supervisor(s) for suspicious sores, lesions, or potential communicable infections (Rule 4.5.7)
- Wrestlers suspected by the referee or coach of having a communicable skin disease or infection may not participate in the match or tournament (Rule 4.2.3)
- Wrestlers “suspected” of having a communicable skin disease or infection may not compete until the wrestler has written documentation from a physician stating that the suspected disease or condition is not communicable, and that the wrestler’s participation will not be harmful to any opponent (Rule 4.2.3.)
- “If an on-site meet physician is present, he/she may overrule the diagnosis of the physician signing the physician’s release form for a wrestler to participate with a particular skin condition” (Rule 4.2.4)

2. Diligent Hygiene on the Part of Wrestlers

- Shower as soon as possible after every practice or contest, using an appropriate (preferably antibacterial) soap
- Do not share personal items (towels, headgear, bars of soap, kneepads, razors, etc.)

3. Diligent Care of Cuts, Scratches, and Abrasions

- Prompt and appropriate cleansing of cuts, wounds, scratches, sores, and abrasions
- Keep all wounds covered (to prevent infection and potential spread of infection)
- Change dressing daily; dispose of soiled dressing in an appropriate manner
- Wear protective gloves when handling soiled dressings; wash hands afterwards
- Promptly reporting potential skin infections or unusual skin markings to the coach
- Having potential infections diagnosed and treated by a physician

4. Diligent Care of Equipment, Practice Clothing, and Uniforms

- Launder practice clothing and uniforms after each use
- Frequently clean personal equipment (kneepads, arm pads, headgear, etc.) with an appropriate cleaning agent

5. Diligent Care and Cleaning of Mat, Wrestling Room, and Locker Areas

- Clean mat and area surrounding the mat daily using a 10:1 bleach mix
- Provide means to clean feet when entering wrestling room/wrestling mat
- Diligent cleaning of mats before and after matches and during tournaments
- Cleaning all equipment used by wrestlers prior to use