



NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

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Communicable Disease Policy Updated

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jerry Diehl

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (September 12, 2005) – The National Federation of State High School Associations' (NFHS) Sports Medicine Advisory Committee recently revised its Communicable Disease Policy.

Previously, the communicable disease policy was centered on blood-borne pathogens and guarding against them. The updated policy now includes information on infectious skin diseases and the prevention of student-athletes transmitting them to one another, in addition to the previous guidelines for blood-borne diseases. The new procedures also contain an information box on universal hygiene protocol for all sports.

“It has become evident that infectious skin diseases are a problem in high school sports,” said Jerry Diehl, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the Sports Medicine Advisory Committee. “This is due to a lack of attention being paid to cleanliness both personally and of equipment.”

The revised infectious skin disease guidelines outline ways to reduce the transmission of skin diseases. A guardian, athletic trainer and coach should be notified of any lesion before the athlete participates in competition or practice. The lesion must be evaluated by a health-care provider before the athlete returns to competition. In the event that an outbreak occurs on a team, especially if that team is participating in a contact sport, the policy suggests evaluating other team members for potential spread of the infectious agent. The guidelines of the NFHS or state/local associations should be followed on the “time until return to competition.” In some instances, the athlete may be allowed to participate with the

affected area covered if it is approved by a health-care provider, and this approval is in accordance with NFHS, state or local guidelines.

In addition to the infectious disease guidelines, a universal hygiene protocol for all sports has also been added.

“The hygiene guidelines were added to focus on infectious skin diseases,” Diehl said.

This hygiene information includes such tips as showering immediately after competition and practice, washing all workout clothing after practice and washing personal gear such as knee pads periodically. The universal hygiene protocol also states that towels and personal hygiene products should not be shared, and that athletes should refrain from cosmetic shaving.

The updated protocol also still includes information on reducing the potential exposure to blood-borne infections.

“It is not that blood-borne pathogens are of less concern,” Diehl said, “but infectious skin diseases have become more of a problem.”

According to the guidelines, bleeding must be stopped immediately and all wounds covered. All blood-soaked clothing must then be removed and cleaned before the athlete can continue participation. All athletic trainers must wear gloves and take any other precautions necessary to prevent themselves and others from blood-splash contamination. Skin that is contaminated must be thoroughly washed with soap and water, and all contaminated surfaces and equipment must be disinfected before the participant returns to the competition. Any blood exposure of bites to the skin that break the surface also must be reported and evaluated by a medical provider immediately.

The newly updated policy can be found on the Sports Medicine page within the NFHS Web site (www.nfhs.org), and it will also be made available in all NFHS sports rules books starting with the 2006 spring sports rules publications.

NFHS Communicable Disease and Skin-Infection Procedures

While the risk for blood-borne infectious diseases, such as HIV/Hepatitis B, remains low in sports, proper precautions are needed to reduce the risk of spreading diseases. Along with these issues are skin infections that occur due to skin contact with competitors and equipment.

Universal Hygiene Protocol for All Sports

- **Shower immediately after all competition and practice**
- **Wash all workout clothing after practice**
- **Wash personal gear, such as knee pads, periodically**
- **Don't share towels or personal hygiene products with others**
- **Refrain from cosmetic shaving**

Infectious Skin Diseases

Means of reducing the potential exposure to these agents include:

- **Notify guardian, trainer and coach of any lesion before competition or practice. Athlete must have a health-care provider evaluate lesion before returning to competition.**
- **If an outbreak occurs on a team, especially in a contact sport, consider evaluating other team members for potential spread of the infectious agent.**
- **Follow NFHS or state/local guidelines on “time until return to competition.” Allowance of participation with a covered lesion can occur if approved by health-care provider and in accordance with NFHS, state or local guidelines.**

Blood-Borne Infectious Diseases

Means of reducing the potential exposure to these agents include:

- **Bleeding must be stopped immediately and all wounds covered. All blood-soaked clothing must be removed before continuing competition or practice. Contaminated clothing must be cleaned before using again.**
- **Trainers or caregivers need to wear gloves and take other precautions to prevent blood-splash from contaminating themselves or others.**
- **Immediately wash contaminated skin or mucous membranes with soap and water.**
- **Clean all contaminated surfaces and equipment with disinfectant before returning to competition. Be sure to use gloves with cleaning.**
- **Any blood exposure or bites to the skin that break the surface must be reported and evaluated by a medical provider immediately.**

Further information can be obtained through your state high school association and the NFHS.

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This article was written by Jackie Paquette, a fall intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department and a junior at Butler (Indiana) University in Indianapolis majoring in journalism.

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