

Herpes Gladiatorum Fact Sheet

1. **What is herpes gladiatorum (HG)?** - HG is a skin infection caused by the *Herpes simplex* type 1 virus.

2. **How do you get HG?** - This skin infection is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact. Wrestling with HG lesions will spread this infection to other wrestlers.

3. What is HG illness like?

a. Generally, lesions appear within eight days after exposure to an infected person, but in some cases the lesions take longer to appear. Good personal hygiene and thorough cleaning and disinfecting of all equipment are essential to helping prevent the spread of this and other skin infections.

b. All wrestlers with skin sores or lesions should be referred to a physician for evaluation and possible treatment. These individuals should not participate in practice or competition until their lesions have healed.

c. Before skin lesions appear, some people have a sore throat, swollen lymph nodes, fever or tingling on the skin. HG lesions appear as a cluster of blisters and may be on the face, extremities or trunk. Seek medical care immediately for lesions in or around the eye.

d. Every wrestler should be evaluated by a knowledgeable, unbiased adult for infectious rashes and excluded from practice and competition if suspicious rashes are present until evaluation and clearance by a competent professional.

4. **What are the serious complications from HG?** - The virus can "hide out" in the nerves and reactivate later, causing another infection. Generally, recurrent infections are less severe and don't last as long. However, a recurring infection is just as contagious as the original infection, so the same steps need to be taken to prevent infecting others.

5. How can HG infection be prevented?

a. Good personal hygiene for wrestlers is essential. School kids involved in wrestling should shower at school immediately after practice, using soap and water. They should always use their own plastic bottle of liquid soap. They should use their own towel, and not share their towel with anyone else. They should wash their towel after each use, using hot water with detergent (and bleach if possible); and dry on high heat setting.

b. Equipment and gear should be clean. Practice and competition gear should be cleaned every day. Headgear should be cleaned daily with a Clorox wipe or the same soap they use for showering. The soles of their shoes should be cleaned before stepping on the mat. Towels soaked in a disinfectant solution should always be used.

c. General hygiene is essential to preventing infection with HG. Hands should be cleaned often! At least 15 seconds scrubbing should be done using soap and warm water. An alcohol-based hand rub should be used if their hands are not visibly soiled. They should avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth with their hands. They should clean their hands before and after practice and competitions. They should never pick or squeeze skin sores; drainage is very infectious. They should always report any skin lesions or sores to their athletic trainer or coaching staff immediately. Players should notify teams that they have wrestled in the 8 days prior to an HG disease outbreak and notify/consult with their school physician immediately so that a treatment plan can be implemented.

d. Cleaning and disinfecting the environment is also important in preventing infection with HG. EPA-approved disinfectants must be used according to manufacturer recommendations (viricidal, fungicidal, bactericidal) OR bleach solution (800 ppm = ¼ c bleach: 1 gallon water). Mix daily to be effective. Mats should be washed after every practice session or competition. Locker rooms and shower areas should be cleaned and disinfected daily using EPA-approved product or bleach solution. Mop heads and cleaning cloths should be laundered daily using laundry detergent, hot water and dry on high heat setting. All facilities should be cleaned daily with an appropriate cleaning agent. This would include locker room, practice room, mats and weight room.

6. How is HG diagnosed? - Diagnosis is usually based upon clinical grounds since culture takes too long to be of any practical use.

7. For more information on HG: Additional information from the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSHSA) is available at:

<http://www.nsaahome.org/textfile/spmeds/Herpes.pdf>

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician for specific clinical information.

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