

# IHSAA GUIDELINES TO REDUCE THE INCIDENCE OF COMMUNICABLE SKIN CONDITIONS IN WRESTLING

The following guidelines are not meant to be all inclusive of what may need to be done to prevent communicable skin conditions from occurring in wrestling. They provide practical suggestions that, when implemented, should help reduce the incidence of communicable skin conditions occurring among high school wrestlers. Some of the guidelines go beyond what would normally need to be done to prevent communicable skin conditions from occurring. However, in instances where some wrestlers, or entire teams, seem to be extremely susceptible to communicable skin conditions the more extreme guidelines may prove to be very worthwhile. Some coaches are currently implementing most of the guidelines. Others may be utilizing only selected ones. Whatever the case, **restricting wrestlers with skin lesions from participation, and keeping a clean wrestling environment** are the keys to reducing the incidence of skin infections.

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

### **✓ WRESTLING MATS & ROOM**

- **Clean wrestling mats daily with a disinfectant cleaner\***, preferably within one hour of practice or competition. **There is great benefit from cleaning mats before and after practice.** \*(Disinfectant cleaners used should state they are effective against viruses, fungi, and bacteria. Typically, the label will state the cleaner is bactericidal, fungicidal, & virucidal. Follow the label directions closely for the best effectiveness. **Pay particular attention to the contact time needed for the product to be effective!**)
- **Do NOT allow anyone on your mats with bare feet** as the feet may harbor organisms that cause ringworm, among other communicable conditions.
- **Allow mats to air-dry** before using.
- **Clean wall mats at least weekly (daily is better)** with a disinfectant cleaner.
- **Clean the under-side of the mats** frequently (perhaps weekly).
- **Clean mats between each round of a tournament** to reduce the risk of wrestlers contracting communicable conditions.
- **Repair small holes and tears** with mat tape to reduce the risk of the mat harboring a communicable condition.
- **Daily wash mops heads used to clean mats** to reduce the risk of harboring a communicable condition.

- **Open the doors to the wrestling room each night and use fans to lower the heat and humidity.** Proper ventilation is very important to destroy disease-causing organisms, especially those causing fungal conditions, such as ringworm.

#### ✓ **OTHER EQUIPMENT**

- **Wipe weight room benches** with a disinfectant cleaner after use and/or prior to the next day's use.
- **Wipe headgear, shoes, neoprene sleeves, supports** and braces with a disinfectant cleaner after each practice. Wash/clean shoes, kneepads, head gear once a week.
- **Do not allow wrestlers to share any practice gear or personal items**, such as nail clippers, razors, etc.!

#### ✓ **WRESTLERS, CLOTHING & TOWELS**

- **Do not allow any wrestler into the practice room without clean practice gear!**
- **Wrestlers should not put dirty practice clothes in the same gym bag in which they carry clean practice clothes to school.** This may contaminate the bag and, therefore, the clean clothes.
- **Launder practice gear, uniforms, and towels (including washcloths), after each use.**
  - ▶ **The best practice is to launder everything with water that is 160 degrees, using detergent containing bleach AND dry all articles in a hot dryer.** Check first to see if these conditions will damage any items to be laundered!
- **Do not allow athletes to use common towels for any reason**, including at mat side!
- **Require each wrestler to shower after each practice and contest, scrubbing vigorously with an antibacterial or deodorant soap.**
  - ▶ **Provide liquid soap, if possible, so wrestlers do NOT share bars of soap.**
  - ▶ **If necessary, have wrestlers supply their own soap and shampoo.**
  - ▶ **Athletes with acne problems may wish to use astringent pads** (i.e., Stridex) to clean their face and neck, or other affected areas, after showering.
- **Wrestlers should keep their finger nails trimmed short** to avoid scratching themselves or someone else, as any opening in the skin increases the risk of infection.

- **Wrestlers should boost their natural immunity to all diseases by eating healthy foods and getting adequate rest.**
- ▶ They may also wish to take a one-a-day, multivitamin.

**✓ COACHES, WRESTLERS, & PARENTS**

- **Coaches should visit with wrestlers, and their parents, about how to recognize and prevent the most common skin diseases.**
- **Coaches and wrestlers should do frequent skin checks** in order to find suspect conditions in the early stages.
- **Wrestlers who have been susceptible to skin conditions in the past may want to visit with their family physician regarding preventive oral medication.**

## **GUIDELINES FOR WRESTLERS WHO HAVE A CURRENT SKIN CONDITION**

- ✓ **Wrestlers with any signs of a communicable skin condition MUST be withheld from practice until a medical diagnosis and clearance is obtained.**
- ✓ **Wrestlers having any signs or symptoms of a communicable skin condition should be sent to a doctor IMMEDIATELY!**
- ✓ **Wrestlers with a skin condition, who have current written permission from a physician to participate, should cover the affected area with an occlusive (water resistant) dressing or a gauze pad with water-resistant covering on BOTH sides until the lesion(s) is completely gone!** This will protect them and other wrestlers.
- ✓ **Wrestlers having lesions from a communicable skin condition on their face or neck should launder their pillowcase on a daily basis.**
- ✓ **Wrestlers with any signs of a communicable skin condition should wash their hands frequently** to avoid contaminating themselves, or others.
- ✓ **Wrestlers with communicable skin conditions should be made aware that contact they have with others during the school day, outside the wrestling room, might spread the disease to others.**
- ✓ **Wrestlers who have been prescribed medication for a communicable skin condition should take the medication until it is completely gone,** even if they feel better and the condition begins to look less infectious.