

HERPES GLADIATORUM (HERPES ON SKIN)

CAUSE Herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV-1).

SYMPTOMS The most obvious symptom is a cluster of blisters (fluid-filled bumps) on exposed areas of the body (typically the head, neck, and shoulders). Fever, sore throat, swollen lymph nodes, or burning or tingling of the skin may be present in the 24 hours before the blisters appear.

Blisters will eventually scab and crust. Herpes gladiatorum infections can recur throughout life.

SPREAD Extremely contagious by skin-to-skin contact during athletic competition involving close physical contact and frequent skin abrasions (e.g., wrestling, rugby). Abrasions and other skin conditions increase the chance of getting the infection. Saliva of persons may also contain the virus and even people without symptoms can spread it to others. Surfaces and/or objects like mats, floors, locker room surfaces, equipment, and clothing are not likely sources of infection.

INCUBATION It takes from 2 to 14 days, usually 8 days, from the time a person is exposed and infected for the first time until symptoms develop.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD Most often while blisters and sores are present and unhealed. However, people without symptoms may also be contagious.

EXCLUSION Childcare: For primary infections, exclude until those children who do not have control of their oral secretions no longer have active sores inside the mouth. Contact Sports: Exclude from practice and competition until all sores are dry and scabbed. Treatment with oral medication may shorten exclusion time. Follow the athlete's healthcare provider's recommendations and specific sports league rules for when the athlete can return to practice and competition.

TREATMENT Recommend parents call their healthcare provider. Antiviral medications can shorten the duration of infection. They are not effective after blisters have opened.

PREVENTION/ CONTROL

Coaches and trainers:

- Examine athletes for undiagnosed rashes, blisters, or sores on exposed areas of the body and around the eyes or mouth before practice or competition.
- Check the specific sports league rules for when an athlete can return to practice and competition.
- Instruct athletes to report blisters and/or sores.
- Instruct athletes to report any burning or tingling if it occurs at the site of a prior infection.

Coaches and Trainers should ensure athletes follow these hygiene measures:

Showering

- Shower at school after practice or competition, using liquid soap and water.
- Have their own plastic bottle of liquid soap.
- Have their own towel. DO NOT allow anyone to share towels.
- Wash their towels after each use, using hot water with detergent (and bleach if possible), and dry on high heat setting.

General hygiene

- Clean their hands often! Scrub up for at least 15 seconds using soap and warm water. Use an alcohol-based hand rub if their hands are not visibly soiled and soap and water is not available.
- Encourage them to avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Have them clean their hands before and after practice and competitions.
- DO NOT let them pick or squeeze skin sores as the drainage is very infectious.

Equipment and clothing

- Change their practice and competition clothing every day.
- Clean their equipment daily according to manufacturer's directions.

School - Have written procedures for cleaning and disinfecting* the environment.

- Wash mats after every practice or competition.
- Clean and disinfect locker rooms and shower areas daily.
- Launder mop heads and cleaning cloths daily using laundry detergent in hot water and dry on high heat setting.

* Always use an EPA-approved disinfectant* (viricidal, fungicidal, bactericidal) according to manufacturer recommendations OR bleach solution (800 ppm = ¼ cup bleach into 1 gallon of water). Mix daily.

For more information, please contact your local health department.

[Southern Nevada Health District](#) (Clark County) 775-759-1300 (24 hours)

[Northern Nevada Public Health](#) (Washoe County) 775-328-2447 (24 hours)

[Carson City Health & Human Services](#) (Carson City, Douglas, Lyon Counties) 775-887-2190 (24 hours)

[Division of Public and Behavioral Health](#) (All other Counties) 775-400-0333 (24 hours)

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