

- Launder your uniforms and other athletic clothing in hot water and dry them with a hot dryer.
- Any athletic equipment must be thoroughly sanitized after use to avoid transmission of bacteria, as MRSA can live for days on surfaces. There are companies now that perform this service so you can be assured that you are cleaning your equipment thoroughly without compromising its integrity. Don't forget your gym equipment, as it can become a breeding ground for bacteria as well.
- If you have an open wound, be sure to clean it well, and keep it covered with a bandage that attaches to the skin on all sides.
- Do not ever share or borrow towels, razors, soap, or any other personal items.

#### What are the symptoms of MRSA?

- Boils, rashes, or ingrown hairs - often occurring in the area of the armpits, groin, neck, and buttocks where Staphylococcus bacteria colonize and thrive.
- Unexplained fever, muscular pain and/or fatigue, especially in the several months following a skin infection.

**If you have any of these symptoms, you must see your doctor immediately, and be sure to have any wounds cultured for MRSA.**

We are not doctors, but a group of people from communities across the U.S. who are very concerned about the spread of this potentially deadly bacteria in our country. Our mission is to provide education and emotional support to people who have been affected by MRSA, as well as work towards awareness and prevention of MRSA, both community acquired (CA-MRSA) as well as hospital acquired (HA-MRSA). We want to encourage you to find out all you can about MRSA so that you will know how to prevent it from impacting your lives as it has ours. We hope that you will read this brochure, and pass it on to someone else that needs to know the information contained within it. You can find out more about MRSA by talking to your doctor, and visiting online resources such as are offered by us at <http://www.mrsaresources.com/>, and <http://www.superbugwiki.com>. Please feel free to contact us if we can help you find more information about MRSA.

*The athlete pictured on the front of this brochure is CJ Jackson, a 13 year old from Georgia who is recovering from a near fatal CA-MRSA infection of the bone in early 2005.*

<http://www.mrsaresources.com/>  
<http://www.superbugwiki.com/>

# Community Acquired MRSA and Athletics



# MRSA Awareness in Athletic Organizations and Schools

## What is MRSA?

MRSA is the acronym for Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus bacteria. MRSA is a strain of the common Staphylococcus aureus bacteria that has mutated and become unable to be killed by commonly used antibiotics. Previously it was found almost exclusively in hospitals, but now is a rapidly growing problem in our communities (known as CA-MRSA, or Community Acquired MRSA). It is estimated that Staphylococcus aureus bacteria are carried by 30-50% of the population, and is very easily passed from one person to another. This is especially troublesome in contact sports and school playgrounds.

## Why Athletes?

Coaches, players, parents and school administrators all need to be aware of the presence of CA-MRSA bacteria in our communities because it is so easily spread from person to person.



**Strains of this bacteria, once restricted to hospitals and medical centers, are now appearing in most of our communities in the United States, and at epidemic rates in many areas.** Educating yourself about bacterial infections and how to prevent them is your first line of defense.

## Who is at Risk?

**Anyone who is in physical contact with other people on a regular basis is at a high risk for acquiring CA-MRSA** and other potentially dangerous bacterial infections, as it is estimated that 30-50% of the population carries the bacteria on their bodies every day. Athletic facilities provide the ideal environment for bacteria to thrive, as they are warm and humid. Athletes also become more susceptible as their immune system temporarily lowers after a hard workout.



## Ricky's Story

Ricky Lannetti graduated from Father Judge High School in 2000. He was a football player - a wide receiver - and a good one. After Father Judge, Ricky went on to play at Lycoming College where he became the Warrior's leading receiver in 2003, catching 70 passes for 955 yards in his senior year. It was a school record and Lannetti was named to the first team All-Middle Atlantic Conference. Lycoming was preparing for a game with Bridgewater VA, in the quarterfinals of the NCAA Division III playoffs.

Ricky Lannetti was as prepared as he could be to face the Bridgewater opponent, but a different opponent was stalking Lannetti—an unknown opponent in an unexpected contest—that would battle Ricky for his life, and take it. Ricky Lannetti was admitted to Williamsport Hospital Saturday morning with a blood infection. That night, the night before he was to play in a game that could lead to a national championship, Ricky Lannetti lost his life to a microbe that was ravaging his body. **Ricky Lannetti died from Community Acquired Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus—CA-MRSA.**

## What can MRSA do to me?

MRSA (and Staphylococcus aureus) infection can present itself in forms ranging from **skin infections** (boils, furuncles, cellulitis, ingrown hairs) to potentially fatal **osteomyelitis** (bone infection), **abscesses and vegetative growths on the internal organs** to **septicemia** (bacterial blood poisoning) and **toxic shock syndrome (TSS)**. Recent studies have suggested that over 50% of all skin infections seen by doctors in some areas of the U.S. are MRSA infections. Often, MRSA is initially diagnosed as a spider bite.

Any open wound is a potential entry point for MRSA to enter the bloodstream and many people, like Ricky Lannetti, who acquire this infection are not aware that anything is wrong with them until their organ systems begin to shut down. Unfortunately, Ricky's story is growing more and more common in our communities by the day as young, strong people in our schools and athletic programs country-wide are being infected. The good news is that CA-MRSA is fairly easily preventable, and you have already completed the first step towards prevention by becoming aware of its existence.

## How do I avoid MRSA?

Personal hygiene is key in the prevention of MRSA and Staphylococcus aureus.

- Thorough cleansing after workouts and contact with other players is your primary defense.
- Utilize alcohol-based hand sanitizers during workouts and games.