

Wrestlers and Parents, One of the most significant issues now in all sports and not just wrestling is different skin issues like ringworm, impetigo, MRSHA, staph, etc.... that have become prevalent. Some of these infections can be serious, but the good news is that with proper hygiene these issues are incredibly manageable.

Because of the skin to skin contact and the mats themselves, skin issues are something we have to watch closely in our sport. Plus, the TNAAU, TSSAA and most national tournament are getting extremely strict about skin issues which will keep your wrestler from being able to compete if they get a skin infection

Here are some best practices to prevent skin issues. Please follow them:

1. Try to always shower within 60 minutes anytime your wrestlers have been on the mats. The 60-minute window is critical.
2. Use Bar soap and not liquid soap. Dial is the best brand. Defense soap makes a liquid soap that is good if you like liquid soaps but Dial is cheap and very useful. Defense soap also a beneficial bar soap.
3. Use a dandruff shampoo - Selsun blue or head and shoulders. It inhibits the bacteria that cause scalp issues. You can use these shampoos as a body wash too. You can also get ketoconazole shampoo, it is by prescription, but it is very effective.
4. Use Barrier Foam every time before your wrestler steps on the mat. Defense makes the most popular brand, but they're also a couple of other brands out there. The foam is supposed to put a barrier on the skin to prevent infections. There are a lot of parents that swear by the foam
5. Use antiseptic wipes. All the time. Defense wipes are the best brand of wipes on the market; Kleenex makes a new wet germ removal wipe that's supposed to be good also. It is critical to use wipes if you can't shower within the 60-minute window.

6. Use Lotion every day and every night. You will notice that kids with overly dry skin seem to be the ones who get the most skin infections. Mostly, because when the skin is dry, it cracks and allows germs to get deep into the surface. Moisturizing the skin prevents this.
7. Spray headgear down with Lysol at least once a week. Do not put head gear inside of bags!! The reason you see all wrestlers with headgear attached to the outside of their bags is to let them dry out after practice. If bacteria start to grow in the headgear, then rash will spread all over face and head, and it can get real ugly real fast.
8. Wrestling bags. Clean them out and wash them regularly. Spray them with Lysol weekly. Wrestling Bags are the single most significant source of bacteria and skin infections. Wrestlers put dirty wet clothes in their bags with their shoes and close them up and leave them to sit overnight it becomes a bacteria breeding factory inside the bags.
9. Never wear your wrestling shoes outside. They will pick up bacteria from outside and transfer it to the mats. You can buy rubber skins that you can pull on and off wrestling shoes that are great so that your child doesn't have to take their shoes on and off.
10. Never put your wrestling shoes inside your bag in the same compartment as other items especially clean clothes. Newer wrestling bags have compartments for wrestling shoes. You can also buy clips that will allow you to hang the shoes outside the bag. Amazon sells a brand called Shoe Klitch. They are \$15 and worth it. Also, Spray your wrestling shoes with Lysol at least once a week. Again they are a source where bacteria can grow.
11. Wash knee pads and arm and leg sleeves at least once a week and spray with Lysol regularly. Knee pads are one of the most prominent sources of bacteria transfer because no one ever cleans them.
12. Never allow your wrestler, yourself or anyone to walk on the mats in street shoes. Again this will transfer bacteria from the outside to the mats.

13. Always have your wrestler wipe the bottom of their wrestling shoes off with bleach towel or bleach wipes after they have been to the bathroom or locker room during practice. This practice is VITAL.

14. If your wrestler is in HS or goes to a lot of national tournaments, the best advice is to get them in to see your dr or better yet a dermatologist before the season starts even if they have no issues and talk to them about skin issues. If you have a problem, you will be able to get treatment much faster if you do and they will be able to provide the medical note that you will need so your kid can return to competition after the mandatory 72-hour treatment period. Creams are the best treatment for most skin infections. Lotrimin or Tinactin are over the counter creams. Ketoconazole 2% and Miconazole are the best creams out there, but they are by prescription only.

15. There is a new prophylactic pill that can be taken once a week that research has shown can dramatically reduce or eliminate skin issues. FLUCONAZOLE 100MG TABLET is the standard dose. Ask your Dr. or Dermatologist about it. Dr. Kate Shuster of Galen Medical on Gun barrel see most of the wrestlers in Chattanooga area. She is very familiar with this treatment option, and she is an expert on wrestling skin issues.

16. If your wrestler develops a skin infection: They can still practice as long as treatment has been in place for a minimum of 72 hours. Please do everyone a favor and hold your wrestler out from practice during this 72-hour active infection window. Missing practice or 2 isn't going to keep your wrestler from making the Olympic team and will prevent them from infecting the entire wrestling room.

17. Once you return to practice after the 72-hour window, please make sure you tape over the skin infection entirely as it will still take another 4-6 days for the infection to completely clear. If the infection is in the hair, wrap tape around the head or get a skull cap to wear until it has cleared. You can't use too much tape.

18. If you are taking your wrestler to a competition and they have any skin issues, you will need a signed dr note stating that you began treatment 72 hours before the start of the competition. Some events require specific forms to be filled out so if you have a skin outbreak, you will need to get the particular form from the tournament director that your Dr will need to fill out. Most times it is the NHSCA SKIN FORM. Also, some competitions are starting to ban all kids with skin infections whether they have sign dr note or not. Check with the tournament directors ahead of time, so you don't waste a trip.

19. Help clean your clubs mats. Most clubs will spray and mop their mats daily, but it is even more beneficial if the mats are clean before and after each practice. If you are there and don't mind cleaning ask your coach if you can mop and that 5 minutes you spend can help your club greatly reduce skin infections. If your wrestler is in HS, encourage them to mop their mats before and after each practice. It shows leadership and all coaches will appreciate the effort.

Nothing is worse than traveling to a competition and not being allowed to compete. Almost every decent sized event over the last year, kids have failed skin check and not be allowed to wrestle because of active outbreak. Nationally events have gotten extremely strict about skin checks, and I can guarantee you that all of the local events that they are going to get militant about skin checks this year so please follow the best practices and let's prevent these outbreaks from happening.