

Officials' Roles in Preventing Communicable Diseases

Recently in Metro Atlanta, a 20 year old, former wrestler filed a lawsuit naming schools, athletic agencies, the local wrestling association and the on-site official because he says he contracted type-1 herpes and staph during a high school wrestling match; but not from any equipment. Unfortunately, the player wrestled with another who had the virus. Apparently, no one properly checked the wrestlers and the infected athlete was allowed to compete. The virus was spread to the athlete, he broke out a few days after his match, and as a result, he will have to take oral medication for the rest of his life. According to his lawyer, "many people let the athlete down."

Participation in wrestling may further heighten exposure to communicable diseases. Moreover, while the potential to contract a communicable disease is an inherent risk in the skin-to-skin world of wrestling, preventing the spread is one of the duties of referees.

It is no secret that because of the constant skin-to-skin contact infections of the skin are a common and an unfortunate part of wrestling. The truth is that most types of skin infections in wrestling are minor and only become a major health issue when they are not properly recognized, diagnosed and treated. The issue for officials is with the lack of education in recognizing common types of skin infections such as Ring worm, Herpes simplex, Impetigo, Gladiatorium and Staph/MRSA.

The best way to help prevent the spread of contagious diseases is to become familiar with how the diseases look, where they hide and properly enforce the rules governing contagious diseases.

To aide you as the season approaches, we have provided you with the following hyperlink of common skin diseases in

wrestling: <http://thematdoc.com/educational/health-issues/skin-infections>.

To assist in combating the spread of communicable diseases, you have been provided with an excerpt from the Bluebook that outlines the suggested pattern for skin inspections:

- Check fingernails
- Check the contestant's length of hair
 - Shirt collar length, sideburns
 - Clean shaven
 - Mustache
 - Shaved heads
 - Look around the front and side of the face, the forehead and behind the ears
 - Check under the chin to look in the neck region.
- Continue the skin inspection by thoroughly scanning down the length of the body.
 - Get in the same rhythm or pattern as you move through the line-up.
- Raise the wrestler's arms to examine the sides of the body, under the armpits, and the underside of the arms.
- With the front inspection complete, have the contestant turn-around to complete the inspection.
 - Start at the top, begin with the hair, and check the length in the back. Be satisfied it would not hang over a normal shirt collar.
- Continue the skin inspection by looking carefully around the back of the neck, down across the shoulders through the lower back, and completing the inspection with a close look at the back of the knees.
- Have wrestler(s) correct any violation of inspection criteria.

The authority to enforce the inspection concerns is found in NFHS Rules 4-2-3, 4-2-4 and 4-2-5.

Tip of the Day: Proper signals are crucial during the course of a match in order to ensure that scorer, coaches and athletes know an official's ruling on the mat. Be sure to utilize crisp and definitive signals while working this season.

Something to Consider: Following the end of the match in which wrestler A was defeated, he rips off his headgear and slams it to the mat.

Ruling: This is unsportsmanlike conduct and one point should be deducted from the score of Team A. Officials should be sure to distinguish between the slamming of equipment in disgust and the tossing of equipment to a corner or a coach when the headgear happens to fall to the floor. In the case of the latter, there is no intent and, thus, no violation.