

Preventing Skin Diseases in Wrestling

These days, more than ever, those involved in wrestling know about the dangers of skin diseases. Due to the sport's skin-to-skin nature, this issue has always been apparent. Over the last few years, however, a lot of attention has been brought to the never-ending presence of some of these diseases. Focus has also been shifted to the epidemic of newer, stronger types of infections that arise after irresponsibility by some wrestlers, coaches and teams in general.

Preventing skin diseases is much easier than treating them. A constant effort must be made by athletes, coaches, parents, and any other figures involved in the wrestling community. This is needed to ensure that athletes are kept safe and healthy. Not only can such infections create further health complications, they can also hold athletes back from both practice and competition. This guide of 10 easy tips will help to protect wrestlers from infections that are extremely preventable.

Shower Immediately

The longer you wait to shower after practices and matches, the more time harmful germs are allowed to stay and grow on your skin. When showering, always use liquid antibacterial soap and a mesh scrub to ensure that you're both killing the bacteria and limiting the amount of bacteria that can be left on your showering equipment. There are many antibacterial soaps designed specifically for wrestlers. These aren't necessary, but they do work. Remember to thoroughly dry yourself after you shower, focusing on your feet last.

Know Your Body

Check your body daily for anything out of the norm; if it looks like it shouldn't be there, well ... it probably shouldn't be there. Keep an eye out for red/irritated skin, scratches, peeling, bumps, itching, etc. If you do find something of concern, tell your coach right away. He or she will know the proper course of action and treatment.

Hot Tip: Some Extra Help

In addition to using antibacterial soap, there are several products that you can use to help keep your skin clean and infection-free. Foams and liquid skin “shields” form a germ-resistant layer on top of your skin, helping to prevent infections during practice and competition. Antibacterial towelettes are great for cleaning your skin immediately after practice and just before the shower. Whatever you use, make sure you follow the product directions exactly.

Cut Your Nails

Certain types of bacteria and fungi may live underneath the fingernails, and can easily be transmitted to another wrestler’s skin.

Clean All Facilities Daily

In addition to the actual wrestling room, also clean weight rooms, locker rooms, showers, etc. Wrestling mats should be especially taken care of, as they are one of the most common places where germs can live and grow. At the very least, mop the mat with cleaning fluid that is specifically designed for wrestling mats, and do so before each use. Follow all directions exactly. If possible, mop the mat afterward, as well.

Don’t Share Equipment

Any item that is used during practice, especially shoes and headgear, should absolutely never be shared. This is a very easy way to spread infections.

Wear Clean Practice Gear Daily

It is necessary to have a clean set of gear for every practice session; this includes t-shirts, shorts, and socks. You absolutely cannot wear the same gear for more than one practice, as that is an easy way to transmit skin infections to your teammates. In fact, having an extra, clean set of gear to change into during practice could also help prevent skin diseases, and make you feel a bit more comfortable in the process.

Clean All Equipment Daily

Any equipment that is used on a daily basis needs to be thoroughly cleaned to ensure harmful germs are not hiding out in them. Towels, uniforms, and any other piece of equipment should be washed and dried after every use.

Hot Tip: Use the Dishwasher

An easy way to clean items such as headgear and kneepads is to wash them in a dishwasher. This may seem a bit odd, but the temperature of the water in the dishwasher can get to an extremely high level, and does a very thorough job of disinfecting your gear.

Cover All Wounds

During practice and competition, it is important to cover any open wounds or cuts to prevent infection. Full-length rash guards limit skin-to-skin contact and can help to prevent skin diseases.

Keep Shoes Clean

The majority of bacteria and fungi that is brought into the wrestling room gets there from being on the bottoms of wrestlers' shoes. Don't wear your wrestling shoes outside of the wrestling room, especially into the restroom. Also, don't step on the mat wearing gym or street shoes. There are cleaning mats and other devices that are designed to clean the soles of your shoes prior to entering the room. These items are great, but often expensive and not necessary if the proper precautions are taken.

Don't Use Gym Bags

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is placing dirty gear directly into a gym bag. This is a perfect place for bacteria and fungi to multiply. Using disposable, plastic bags will go a long way in helping to prevent infection.

If Prepared, No Worries

Skin diseases are an unfortunate but common part of being a wrestler. However, if you work these tips into your daily routine there should be no worry of coming down with something that could have easily been prevented. You will undoubtedly be healthier and happier knowing that you're doing whatever you can in order to protect yourself.