

### WHAT IS HERPES GLADIATORUM OR “MAT HERPES”?

**HERPES GLADIATORUM IS A SKIN INFECTION CAUSED BY THE HERPES SIMPLEX VIRUS TYPE I. IT IS SOMETIMES CALLED “MAT HERPES” BECAUSE ATHLETES WHO PARTICIPATE IN HIGH-CONTACT SPORTS, LIKE WRESTLING, MAY HAVE GREATER CHANCES OF CONTRACTING THE VIRUS.**

#### **HOW IS IT SPREAD?**

Herpes gladiatorum is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact with infected lesions or by contact with contaminated items (e.g., mats, towels, cell phones).

#### **WHO IS AT RISK FOR HERPES GLADIATORUM?**

Anyone can become infected, but athletes and their families are at greatest risk for infection.

#### **WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?**

Herpes gladiatorum typically begins as a skin rash with blisters or fluid-filled lesions. The rash is commonly seen on the head, face, neck, shoulders, arms, or trunk of the body. If the eyes or surrounding areas become infected, seek medical treatment immediately. A sore throat, swollen lymph nodes, fever, and skin tingling may precede or accompany the rash.

#### **HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE FOR SYMPTOMS TO APPEAR?**

In most cases, symptoms will develop approximately 8 days after exposure to the virus, but may present anywhere from 2 days to 2 weeks later.

#### **CAN A PERSON HAVE REPEATED EPISODES OF SYMPTOMS?**

Yes. Once a person has contracted the virus, it will remain in their body for life. They may have periodic bouts of symptoms. Recurrent episodes of rash and lesions are typically milder than the first episode.

#### **HOW LONG IS A PERSON ABLE TO SPREAD THE VIRUS?**

Herpes gladiatorum can be spread until the blisters or lesions are no longer present or until a doctor determines the person is no longer infectious.

#### **HOW IS HERPES GLADIATORUM DIAGNOSED?**

Herpes gladiatorum may look like other types of skin infections. Therefore, persons who think they may have the virus should visit their medical provider. A laboratory test can diagnose the virus.

#### **IS THERE A TREATMENT?**

Oral antiviral medications may be prescribed to speed recovery of symptomatic persons or prevent the infection from occurring.

## HERPES GLADIATORUM: “MAT HERPES”

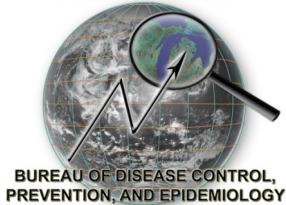
For more information about herpes gladiatorum, contact your local health department or the Michigan Department of Community Health at 517-335-8165 or visit [www.michigan.gov/cdinfo](http://www.michigan.gov/cdinfo).

## WHAT CAN ATHLETES DO TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF INFECTION?

- ◆ Inform your coach immediately if herpes gladiatorum is suspected or if you have skin rashes, lesions, or blisters
- ◆ Do not practice, play, or compete if skin rashes, lesions, or blisters are present until a medical provider says it is safe to do so
- ◆ Do not pick or squeeze skin blisters or lesions – the drainage can be infectious to others
- ◆ Clean and disinfect personal gear and equipment daily
- ◆ Shower immediately after practice and matches with soap and water
- ◆ Do not share towels, soap, or clothing
- ◆ Wash clothes and towels with hot water and soap after each use – use bleach if possible – dry laundry on the hottest temperature setting
- ◆ Frequently wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer if hands are not visibly soiled
- ◆ Avoid touching your face (e.g., eyes, nose, mouth)



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT  
OF COMMUNITY HEALTH



## ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION OF PRACTICE AREAS, MATS,  
EQUIPMENT, AND LOCKER ROOMS CAN HELP STOP THE  
TRANSMISSION OF HERPES GLADIATORUM.

- ◆ EPA-approved cleaners should be used according to manufacturer's directions
- ◆ A bleach solution (800 ppm) may also be used to disinfect the environment – mix 1/4 cup of bleach with 1 gallon of water – solutions should be prepared daily or the effectiveness may be diminished
- ◆ Locker rooms and shower areas should be cleaned daily with an EPA approved cleaner or freshly prepared bleach solution
- ◆ Mats should be disinfected after every practice and competition