

OAR Equipment Cleaning Protocol

Drug resistant staph infections are a risk for athletes in many sports, including rowing. To prevent any spread of MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, a type of bacteria that is resistant to several antibiotics), effective immediately, all oar handles must be wiped with a dilute bleach solution after each practice. A bucket of that solution will be available at the front of the boathouse in the center bay and oars can be dipped in that solution. Gunwales and oarlocks on club equipment must also be wiped down. All erg handles must also be wiped down.

Hand sanitizer will also be available at the boathouse. You are encouraged to wash your hands and/or use sanitizer often.

About MRSA

Staphylococcus aureus is a bacteria commonly carried on the skin and in the nose of approximately 25-30 percent of the population. They do not necessarily cause an infection, but it is the most common cause of skin infections in the United States. MRSA is a form that is resistant to some drugs used to treat such infections. Left untreated, MRSA can lead to more serious infections and health consequences.

MRSA is usually spread in the community by contact with infected people or things that are carrying the bacteria. It can be an issue in a number of sports, including rowing. In rowing, the bacteria may remain on an oar or erg handle or other equipment after it has been used by an infected person and be transmitted to the next user.

If you have a skin infection:

Please seek medical attention. It may be a simple staph infection or it may be MRSA, and it may require a test to make that determination. Most *S. aureus* skin infections, including MRSA, appear as a bump or infected area on the skin that might be:

- red
- swollen
- painful
- warm to the touch
- full of pus or other drainage
- accompanied by a fever

Any rower who has a fever of any kind must stay home. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that athletes with a MRSA infection can continue to take part in their sport only if the infection can be properly covered by a bandage while performing their sport. The term "properly covered" means that the skin infection is covered by a securely attached bandage or dressing that will contain all drainage and will remain intact throughout the activity.

More information

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have a very informative MRSA general information website that includes photos and more information. US Rowing also has an informative article.

We appreciate your cooperation with the protocol.