



Herpes Gladiatorum

Herpes gladiatorum is a viral skin infection that occurs frequently among wrestlers and is sometimes called “mat herpes”. It is not a sexually transmitted disease.

If you think your child has herpes gladiatorum:

- Tell your coaches and school health staff.
- Your child does **not** need to stay home from childcare and school.
- Blisters should be covered and sharing of contaminated items (bottles, clothing items, etc.) should be avoided.
- **Keep your child out of all contact sports** until all sores are dry and scabbed. Follow your health care provider’s recommendations and the specific sports league rules about when to return to practice and competition.
- For more information, call Hennepin County Epidemiology at 612-543-5230 or your local health department.

Parent/Guardian information

Symptoms

A single blister or a cluster of blisters (fluid-filled bumps) may be the only symptom. The bumps are usually on exposed areas of the head, neck, and shoulders. Sometimes fever, sore throat, swollen lymph nodes, or burning or tingling of the skin may be present before the blisters appear. Blisters will eventually scab and crust. *Herpes gladiatorum* infections can recur throughout life.

If your child is infected, it may take 2 to 14 days for symptoms to start.

Spread

- By skin-to-skin contact or touching saliva.
- Usually spread during sports with close physical contact or during sports that tend to cause skin abrasions.

Contagious period

Until all sores are dry and scabbed.

Call your health care provider

If anyone in your home has symptoms or if there are sores around the eye. Your doctor will decide what treatment is needed.

Prevention

- Parents/guardians should inform gym teachers, school health, and coaching staff if your child has blisters and/or sores. Also, inform staff if your child has had herpes gladiatorum in the past and develops burning or tingling at the site where the infection was before.
- Do not pick or squeeze skin sores; drainage is very infectious.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with your hands.
- Clean your hands with warm water and liquid soap before and after practice and competitions.
- **Showers at school after practice or competition.** Use your own plastic bottle of liquid soap. Wash your towel after each use, using hot water with detergent (and bleach if possible) and dry on high heat setting.
- **Change clothes and clean equipment daily.** Clean equipment with the same soap you use for showering.