

On The Alert!

Date: March 21, 2019
Attention: ASCIP Members
Affected Department(s): Risk Management, Admin, Teachers, & Staff
Applicability: K-12 & Community College Districts & Charter Schools

ARTIFICIAL TURF AND DISTRICT RISK

Recent member inquiries regarding MRSA in synthetic turfs resulted in the development of this document. Based on ASCIP's research there is little or no scientific evidence to support the concern that surfaces made of infilled synthetic turf (artificial turf) harbor *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria, the bacteria that cause MRSA¹.

Two studies^{2 3} have examined the causes and the role of artificial turf in MRSA outbreaks. Neither study suggested that players contracted the infection directly from bacteria in the artificial turf. Instead the studies have shown that more likely causes were (a) poor sanitary conditions in locker rooms and training facilities and (b) physical contact between players.

Another study tested samples collected from artificial turfs¹. They found that staph microbial concentration on artificial turf surfaces was low compared to those on natural grass and concluded "concern[s] that infilled synthetic turf harbors and provides a breeding ground for [staph bacteria] [are] unwarranted."



Consistent with these studies, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not view artificial turf as a significant source of MRSA infections. Furthermore, the CDC does not recommend treating artificial turf surfaces with antimicrobial agents, as benefits have not been scientifically documented, and potential disadvantages exist. Per the CDC⁴ "[t]here is a lack of evidence that large-scale use (e.g., spraying or fogging rooms or surfaces) of disinfectants will prevent MRSA infections more effectively than a more targeted approach of cleaning frequently-touched surfaces." The CDC emphasizes the cleaning of the artificial turf should be performed in accordance with the synthetic turf manufacturers recommendation.

Therefore, ASCIP recommends the following:

- ✚ Maintain sanitary conditions in the lockers and training facilities.
- ✚ Clean the artificial turf pursuant to manufacturer recommendations.

¹ Serensits TJ, McNitt AS, Peterunak DM. 2011. [Human health issues on synthetic turf in the USA](#). J Sports Eng. & Tech. 2011;225(Part P). DOI:10.1177/1754337111398407.

² Kazakova, S.V. et al. 2005. [A Clone of Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus among Professional Football Players](#), February 3, 2005, N Engl J Med 2005; 352:468-475, DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa042859.

³ Begier et al. 2004. [A High-Morbidity Outbreak of Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus among Players on a College Football Team, Facilitated by Cosmetic Body Shaving and Turf Burns](#). Clin Inf Dis. 2004;39:1446-53.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Cleaning & Disinfecting Athletic Facilities for MRSA](#).

Please contact your ASCIP risk services consultant at (562) 404-8029 to discuss further.