



Bacterial infection found within sports equipment is a real danger. The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention in the USA sites 5 ways in which bacteria and infections spread:

1. **CROWDING**
2. **CONTACT**
3. **CUTS & ABRASIONS**
4. **CONTAMINATION** of items and surfaces
5. Lack of **CLEANLINESS**

What's growing in my gear?

Sports padding for hockey players, football players and lacrosse players, for example, are the ideal **breeding ground**

for trouble. A strong odour is usually the result of a mixture of sweat, mucus, blood, dirt, and other substances, which create the perfect environment for **bacteria**, **mold**, and **fungus** to thrive in. Here is a sample of what is found in the typical gear:

Staphylococcus Epidermis	Gloves, Elbow Pads, & Shoulder Pads
Staphylococcus Aureus	Helmet - leads to pimples, boils and complicated skin infections
Streptococcus Veridans	Shin Guards & Elbow Pads - normally found in the mouth
Streptococcus Faecalis	Hockey Jock / Jill - associated with stool and fecal material
Environmental Bacteria	Picked up from water fountains
Yeast	Normally found on skin surfaces and in the intestinal tracts

Is there a health risk?

Bacteria and surface molds can enter the body through **cuts and abrasions**, causing more severe infections. Some are aggressive, long-lasting and can expand into other areas of the body. Remember the **5 ways** (5 C's) for contracting infections mentioned above? Contact sports often involve crowding of people, skin contact, cuts, contamination of locker rooms and **lack of cleanliness** when it comes to protective gear (helmets, pads, gloves, etc).

Thus, athletes specifically need to be concerned.



What is MRSA?

MRSA is a form of "staph infection" caused when **Staphylococcus Aureus** bacteria, that is resistant to the Methicillin family of antibiotics, enters the body. These enter the body through cuts and abrasions and can lead to pneumonia, joint and blood-stream infections. MRSA usually appears, at first, as "spider bites" or small boils in the skin. If you experience any like the ones pictured here, consult a physician.



What can be done?

NATA, the National Athletic Trainers Association, recommends that athletes **avoid sharing towels**, razors, and daily athletic gear. Also strongly recommended is to **clean and disinfect** protective equipment such as helmets, shoulder pads, catcher's equipment and hockey goalie equipment on a regular basis.

Source: http://www.freshgear.ca/mrsa_danger_athletes_medical.html