



Building Blocks of Clinical Practice

Helping Athletic Trainers Build a Strong Foundation



Issue #3: Viral Infections of the Skin

Herpes Gladiatorum

Definition/Cause:

- Is a cutaneous infection caused by the HSV-1 and spreads through direct skin to skin contact
- Common sites include the head, upper extremity and trunk

Signs and Symptoms:

- Usually begins with tingling or burning at infected site followed by clusters of vesicles on an erythematous base that with time become crusted
- Infection may also involve fever, lymphadenopathy, malaise or myalgia

Diagnosis:

- Based upon appearance and clinical grounds

Treatment:

- Antiviral medication in early stages; Topical benzoyl peroxide if lesions are ulcerated; Antiviral medications may be taken prophylactically
- Athlete should be withheld from any participation until athlete is asymptomatic, there are no new lesions for three days and there is a firm crust on each lesion and the athlete has been taking antiviral medication five days

Prevention:

- Covering skin lesions does not reduce or prevent infection from spreading
- Practice good hygiene
- Regular equipment and environmental cleaning



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Herpes Simplex

Definition:

- A virus that affects the skin and nervous system

Causes:

- Caused by both herpes simplex virus 1 (HSV-1) and herpes simplex virus 2 (HSV-2)
- Herpes viruses cycle between periods of active disease followed by a remission period, during which lesions disappear
- After initial infection, the viruses move to sensory nerves, where they reside as life-long, latent viruses

Signs and Symptoms:

- Herpes simplex is most easily transmitted by direct contact with a lesion or the body fluid of an infected individual but may also occur through skin-to-skin contact during periods of asymptomatic shedding

Diagnosis:

- Visual inspection of lesions is used for diagnosis
- A culture of the vesicle will provide definitive results in 24 to 48 hours or direct immunofluorescence assay produces results in a matter of hours

Treatment:

- There is no cure for herpes. Antiviral medications can reduce the frequency, duration, and severity of outbreaks as well as reduce asymptomatic shedding.

Prevention:

- Avoid skin to skin contact
- Practice good hygiene
- Avoid sharing towels or clothing with anyone

Continued...

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continued...

Verrucas Virus (Warts)

Description:

- Verrucas are warts which grow on the soles of the feet. These are non-cancerous skin growths

Causes:

- Verrucas are caused due to the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)
- More than 70 types HPV can lead to a wart

Signs and Symptoms:

- Seen as a small, round, elevated lesion with rough dry surface
- May contain markings resembling small black seeds
- Focal pressure on lesion increases pain

Diagnosis:

- Visual diagnosis

Treatment:

- The wart may disappear on its own as the immune system reacts to the virus
- Otherwise, treatment may involve liquid nitrogen, salicylic acid, or dissection. Warts should be covered during participation

Prevention:

- Wear flip-flops in public showers, swimming pools and other communal areas.
- Walking barefoot can spread the virus.

Molluscum Contagiosum

Description:

- A skin rash caused by a virus
- The virus is a member of the Poxvirus family
- It is common worldwide and accounts for about 1% of all skin disorders in the United States
- It primarily affects children (boys more often than girls) and young adults

Causes:

- Transmitted by direct contact, either person to person or by shared items, such as clothing, towels, and washcloths
- Can be spread by contact sports
- Can also be spread if a person touches the rash and then another part of his or her body (known as autoinoculation)

Signs and Symptoms:

- Presents as a small, skin-colored, smooth and dome shaped papule with a central spot. Lesions are very contagious

Diagnosis:

- Based on its distinctive appearance
- In most cases, no tests are necessary

Treatment

- Lesions spontaneously resolve in 6-12 months
- Aggressive treatment involves use of liquid nitrogen on each lesion or curetting each lesion

Prevention:

- Good personal hygiene is a key factor in avoiding transmission of this disease

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