

Resources

- Centers for Disease Control
<http://www.cdc.gov>
 - The Mayo Clinic
<http://www.mayoclinic.com>
 - National Athletic Trainers Association
<http://www.nata.org/NR062310>
 - Simmons College Center for Hygiene and Health in the Home and Community
<http://www.simmons.edu/hygieneandhealth/>
 - Cleaning to Reduce the Risk of H1N1 Flu Virus at Home
<http://www.simmons.edu/hygieneandhealth/H1N1%20cleaning%20again%20brochure.pdf>
 - New Year's Resolutions: Sticking to the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans
http://www.simmons.edu/hygieneandhealth/docs/Exercise_January_2011.pdf
- Preventing MRSA in Home and Community
http://www.simmons.edu/hygieneandhealth/docs/MRSA_brochure_revised_2.pdf
- Recreational Water Illness: Swim



Center for Hygiene & Health in the Home and Community

Overview

The gym is synonymous with exercise and health. But common community infections, including respiratory, skin and gastrointestinal infections can be contracted in athletic facilities. Good gym hygiene practices and personal cleanliness can help to prevent the spread of germs and reduce the risks infection. Following the simple guidelines described in this brochure can help protect everyone using the gym.



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Gym Hygiene: How to Reduce the Risk of Infections in the Gym

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Prevention: Hygiene and Personal Cleanliness

Hygiene plays a big roll in reducing the spread of infections. Follow these tips to protect yourself and others.



- Wash or sanitize hands frequently.
- Sanitize hands on *entering* and *leaving* the gym.
- Use no touch sinks or towel dispensers whenever possible.
- Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing. Use your elbow, if necessary.
- Sanitize your hands after coughing and sneezing.
- Wipe down equipment and mats with disinfectant spray or wipes before and after use.
- Use your own water bottle instead of a communal water fountain.
- Bring your own exercise mat for stretching or classes that require one.
- Take a shower soon after exercising and change into clean, dry clothes.
- Wear water shoes or flip flops in the bathroom and shower.
- Wash and dry gym clothes and swimsuits after each use.
- Cover any breaks in the skin with a water-proof bandage.
- Do not use whirlpools or common pools if you have an open wound, skin or GI or infection.
- Always use a clean towel.
- Do not share headbands, towels, water bottles, goggles, soap, razors, brushes, combs or any other item that may come in contact with someone else's skin.

Here are some of the common community infections that can be transmitted at gym facilities

Skin Infections

- Ringworm (*Tinea corporis*) is a fungal infection that develops on the top layer of skin. Symptoms include an itchy, circular, red rash with healthy skin in the center. It is contagious and can spread via direct skin contact or via contact with a contaminated surface.
- Athlete's Foot (*tinea pedis*) is a related fungal infection that can cause problems on moist areas of the foot and between toes. Symptoms include itching, burning and stinging. Damp socks, sneakers, plastic shoes all encourage fungal growth. Floors and towels contaminated with the fungus may contribute to the spread of the disease.
- *Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is a type of staph bacteria that causes serious skin infections and is resistant to many antibiotics. Symptoms include painful boils or pustules that are red, swollen, and contain pus or other fluid. Infection tends to occur where the skin has been damaged by cuts, tiny breaks or bruises. MRSA can be spread via skin to skin contact and via contact with shared equipment, towels etc.



Respiratory Infections

- Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. The elderly, children, pregnant women and individuals with compromised immune systems are most at risk. Symptoms include fever or chills, cough, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, body aches, headaches, fatigue and in some people diarrhea and vomiting. The virus is spread by inhalation of infected airborne droplets and after touching the face following contact with contaminated surfaces.
- *Human rhinovirus* are a common group viruses that cause the common cold. The infection grows in temperatures between 91 and 95° F, making the nose a prime breeding ground. Symptoms include runny nose, sore throat, cough, sneezing and congestion. Rhinovirus is typically spread via respiratory droplets on surfaces or person-to-person contact.

Gastro-Intestinal Infections

- Noroviruses are an extremely contagious group of viruses that cause acute gastroenteritis in humans. Symptoms include acute-onset vomiting, watery diarrhea, abdominal cramps and nausea within 12 to 48 hours of contracting the illness. Transmission may occur through the so-called "fecal-oral route", via the hands following direct contact with another infected person or contact with contaminated surfaces.