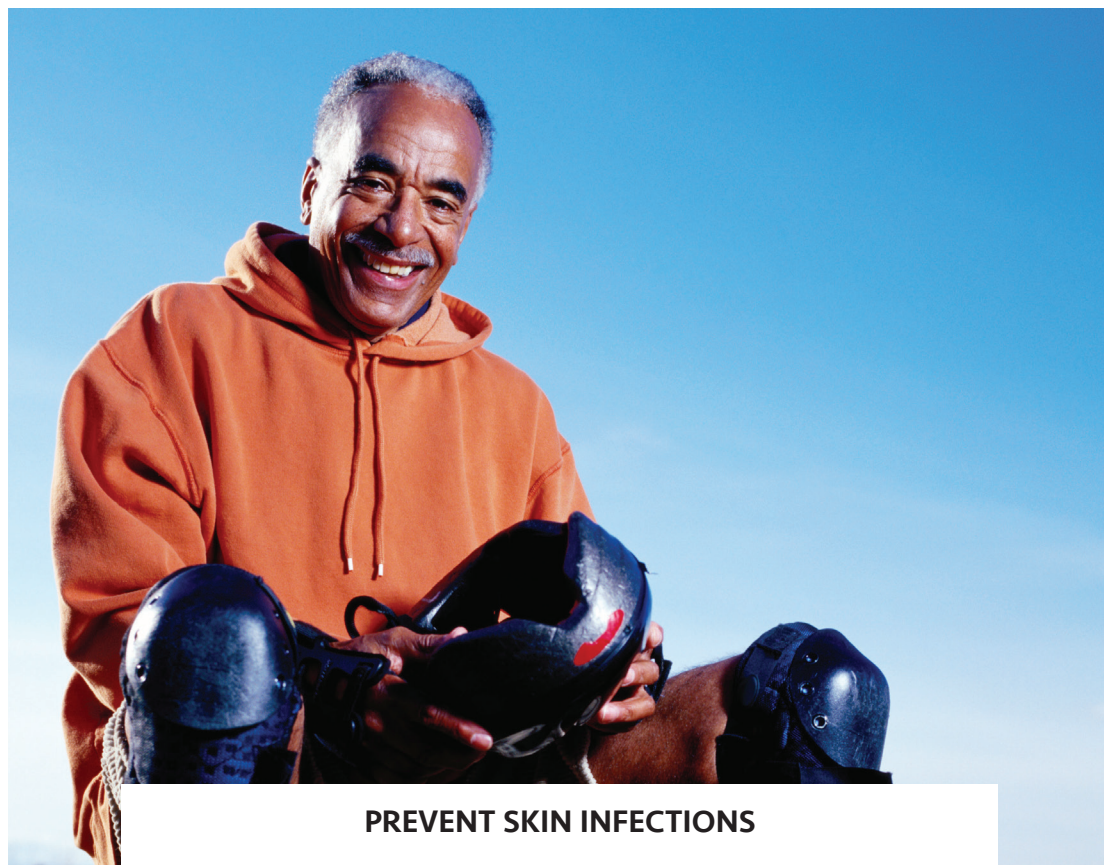




Stay in the game

Although many athletes understand the importance of keeping their muscles and bones healthy, it's also important for them to take care of their skin. Sports equipment, especially protective helmets and pads, creates a warm, moist and dark environment for the germs that can cause skin infections to grow.

Athletes are at an increased risk of skin infection, which can have serious consequences and may take them—and their teammates—out of the game for days, weeks, or months. If athletes notice anything on their skin that itches, burns, or may be infected, they should see a board-certified dermatologist or sports medicine doctor.



PREVENT SKIN INFECTIONS

- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed. A cut or scrape weakens the skin's defense and allows germs that cause infections to enter.
- Prevent blisters to reduce infections. Apply a pad, gel, or spray to areas that routinely blister. To help prevent blisters on the feet, ankles, and hands, consider using specialized gloves and socks or wearing two pairs of socks. Also, make sure your footwear fits properly.
- Wear moisture-wicking clothes. This helps keep the skin dry and prevents germs from growing.
- Wear sandals in the locker room to help reduce foot infections.
- Shower after every practice and game. In addition, athletes should use an antimicrobial soap and wash their entire body.
- Always use a clean towel after showering and use your own towels, soaps, razors, and other personal care items.
- Wash clothes and towels after each use. Sports bags should also be washed regularly.
- Disinfect equipment, including protective gear, daily. For proper disinfection, follow the manufacturers' instructions.
- Do daily skin checks, especially if in high-risk sports, such as wrestling. Look for any changes, such as cuts, sores, redness, swelling and pus, and report any changes to an athletic trainer or doctor.