

	NSAWA Infection Control & Hygiene	Approved: January, 2024	Up for review: May, 2026
---	---	----------------------------	-----------------------------

Wrestling is a contact sport, so, under normal circumstances, skin-to-skin, face to face contact between two or more players is inevitable. The very nature of the combat sport of wrestling creates opportunities for a variety of communicable diseases to be spread between athletes. Viruses such as the common cold, influenza and covid -19 can be easily transmitted through breathing infected respiratory droplets from another athlete. Skin infections found in wrestlers are usually minor and typically only become serious if not diagnosed and treated quickly. The most common skin infections amongst wrestlers are also highly contagious, and thrive in the hot sweaty environment of a wrestling room. Most commonly in wrestling, a fungal infection called Tinea Corporis Gladiatorum, or RingWorm, is the bane of wrestling rooms, and can pass easily between competitors and their families both during, and after practice and competition.

Preventing skin infections is much easier than treating them. Parasitic infections between wrestlers are uncommon, but deserve mention. For younger aged wrestlers, head lice can be easily transmitted. People of all ages in Nova Scotia are at risk for contacting ticks, and wrestlers can have increased exposure to ticks brought to practice on other athletes. Nova Scotia is a lyme disease endemic area, and therefore WNS asks all members to keep an eye out for ticks transferred between athletes.

For all of these reasons, WNS has been working closely with wrestling programs in NS and has developed this multi-faceted approach to infection prevention and control. This document has; I) recommendations for all members to follow in their wrestling rooms to reduce the risk of infectious diseases and II) A policy for officials, athletes and coaches to follow when a potentially infectious disease is identified in an athlete, and attached conditions for returning to play.

I) WNS Recommends that Wrestling Programs, and All Participants Undertake to Follow these Practices to reduce the rate of infectious diseases on our wrestling teams

1. Keep it Clean (Body, Clothing and Equipment)

- **WRESTLING BOOTS MUST BE WORN** on the wrestling mat. Boots should be kept clean, and worn exclusively for wrestling. Clean indoor footwear may be worn for new participants who are trying it out.
- WNS recommends that wrestling shoes be worn both to prevent ankle injury, but also because the design of the sole allows for easy cleaning. Many skin infections in wrestlers can come from transfer of fungal spores from off the mat on the footwear, to the wrestling mat.
- WNS recommends that Wrestling Teams undertake to use a **Boot Bath**, a plastic container with a small volume of cleaning solution effective against bacteria, viruses and fungi, where athletes dip their feet, and scuff them dry on a pad before returning to wrestle after a bathroom break. Be sure to select a cleaning solution that is both effective, but will not harm the surface of your mats.
- WNS recommends that coaches encourage athletes to keep their water on the edge of the mat, so that fewer chances to add micro-organisms to the practice surface on the athlete's feet are observed

- WNS recommends that wrestling teams and programs undertake to clean their mats before every practice, as well as after practice if time and supplies permit. We recommend using the same approved cleaning solution used in the Boot Bath, and delivered with wet jet mops. These pads must be removed, and washed along with the fabric used to dry the mats after every practice, either towels or squeegees.
- WNS recommends that athletes wear rash guards to prevent skin to skin contact whenever possible during practice. For athletes who sweat a lot, it is very important to bring extra gear and a towel to practice.
- WNS recommends that wrestling teams consider the use of Defense wipes (™) and Defense soap (™) to reduce the transmission of fungal infections between athletes.

2. CHECK IT OUT

- Wrestlers should check their skin daily through the wrestling season. Parents should assist younger wrestlers to complete skin checks especially in hard to see areas such the back of the neck, and behind knees.
- During some competitions, officials are expected to complete skin checks for each wrestler and can disqualify wrestlers found to have an untreated skin condition such as *tinea corporis* (fungal infection-AKA ringworm), or *impetigo* (a bacterial infection).
- The most common communicable diseases between wrestlers are respiratory infections (mostly the common cold) and fungal skin infections- observe the skin for annular ring-like patches, which may appear varying shades of pink to red depending on the athlete skin color. If this type of patch is identified, it could be ringworm, a highly contagious fungal infection. WNS recommends that if a suspected skin infection is identified, the athlete must immediately leave the mat and report it. If it is identified at home, the athlete or their parents MUST report it to the coaching staff immediately.
- If an athlete is suspected of having an infectious respiratory or skin disease, they should not come to practice or competition. Anyone with cough, sneezing fever or cold chills should be self-isolating, and seeking medical attention where indicated, calling 811 if they are not sure about what to do.
- Infectious diseases can only be diagnosed and treated by a qualified health professional. If a parent, athlete, coach or official suspects an athlete may have a communicable disease, WNS recommends that the athlete be cleared by a qualified health professional, and a note be provided so that coaches, parents, team mates, officials and competitors can be sure that all athletes are safe to practice and compete.
- It is not appropriate to share private medical information with others, so this policy ensures that participants will check it out, and not participate until a qualified health professional clears the athlete.
- It is the responsibility of all of us to check it out in order to keep one another safe.

3. REPORT IT

- Wrestlers/parents are expected to promptly report any new/undiagnosed skin conditions, or other potentially communicable diseases to the coaching staff.
- Wrestlers with a possible skin infection or respiratory illness will be removed from practice until they have been assessed, diagnosed and treated appropriately by a qualified Physician, Nurse Practitioner or Pharmacist with appropriate training.
- Often the visible symptoms of skin infection will persist after a wrestler has been treated and is no longer contagious. Wrestlers who have been appropriately treated may return to practice provided

treated areas are covered by clothing and/or a bandage. We will rely on the participant's MD or NP to provide direction regarding when athletes will be cleared for return to play.

- Athletes who have had skin infections must bring a note from a qualified health professional (Physician or Nurse Practitioner), certifying that the particular skin lesion in question as non-contagious. Officials may disqualify an athlete from competing if there is an identified, potentially contagious skin infection if they do not have a MD or NP note.
- It is the responsibility of the athlete, their parents and the coaches to report it, so that infections are treated in time, and the athlete can return to play as soon as possible

4. AVOID OPPORTUNITIES TO SPREAD DISEASE

- Wrestlers should avoid sharing personal items such as water bottles, towels, hair brushes, hair clippers, nail clippers, razors, hats and hoodies.
- Wrestlers with active skin lesions, or respiratory illnesses should avoid whirlpool tubs and swimming pools.
- We ask that wrestlers avoid sharing germs with their coaches and teammates. If your wrestler is sick with a cold, influenza or other respiratory illness please keep them home until they are feeling better. Contact 811 if they meet screening criteria for covid-19.

WNS aims to reduce the risk of spreading viral, bacterial, fungal and parasitic infections between our athletes, keeping all our members safe and practicing the sport they love, by always following the WNS Infection Prevention and Control Policy. **Remember to keep it clean, check it out, report it, and avoid opportunities to spread disease.**

II) Protocol for Infection Prevention and Control in Competition

1. Following the WNS Infection Control and Hygiene Policy by Keeping it clean, Checking It out, Reporting It and Avoiding risk will help to ensure our Officials do not need to remove an athlete from play unnecessarily. Keeping all the athletes safe is the primary responsibility of our Officials.
2. Skin checks will be performed along with weigh-ins at major tournaments. Whenever possible, officials should undertake to work in teams of 3 or 4 to complete the skin check and weigh in, with a more experienced referee and draw master paired up with less experienced Officials.
3. WNS and the NSAWOA will undertake to ensure that all Officials are trained in the basics of a lay-person skin assessment. Only a Medical Doctor, Nurse Practitioner or Pharmacist with appropriate qualifications can diagnose a skin disease. The goal of skin checks is to identify potentially contagious skin conditions, and to ensure that the athlete has sought proper medical assessment and treatment, if necessary, prior to competing.
4. When an Official identifies a potentially contagious skin condition, the following steps will be taken. Coaches and athletes are expected to have this type of problem identified and addressed so that our officials can make the right decision when they notice a suspicious lesion, either at weigh-ins and skin checks or before a match begin
 - a. Suspicious skin lesions are identified by an official who is not a qualified Medical Doctor, Nurse Practitioner or Pharmacist.
 - b. Report the skin lesion to the Coach and to the Head Official.
 - c. Ask the athlete, their parents or their coach to present a note, written by a Medical Doctor, Nurse Practitioner or Pharmacist that certifies the skin lesion is not contagious, or if it was, that it has been treated, and no longer poses a risk of infection.

- d. A secure dressing must be applied to any raw or open areas of skin, or to skin lesions that have been treated and are no longer deemed contagious by a qualified health professional. Dressings must be secured in a manner that is deemed satisfactory by the on mat official, mat chair or head official.
- e. If an athlete with a suspicious skin lesion is identified and does not have a note from a qualified health professional, then the athlete will be removed from the field of competition until such a note is provided to the head official.
- f. WNS expects all athletes and coaches to promptly identify and manage any potentially contagious conditions through appropriate channels well before the competition, so that officials may make the right decision when assessing the skin of athletes on the mat or before the competition starts.
- g. If a suspicious lesion is identified, and no note is available, it is appropriate for the official to ask for the assessment of a medical or first aid staff, or another volunteer or official provided that they are a Medical Doctor, Nurse Practitioner or qualified Pharmacist, and they are willing to assume the responsibility of diagnosing the skin lesion in question in a patient they may not know at all. The athlete or their parents if they are under the age of 18 must also consent to the medically trained official or volunteer to do the skin assessment. Most tinea corporis infections can be diagnosed by observation with a trained clinical eye, however, confirmatory testing is sometimes required, so it may not always be possible for a trained official to make the diagnosis on direct observation.

Through following the principles of A) Keeping it clean B) Checking it out C) Reporting it and D) Avoiding chances to spread it, WNS aims to keep all wrestling gyms and competitions places where infection is less likely to spread and easier to identify and manage in all our participants.

Following these principles will allow athletes, parents and coaches to identify skin problems and get them assessed by appropriate medical professionals and treated in time to avoid limiting an athlete's chances to participate in wrestling. We are all responsible to keep each other safe. Following the infection prevention policy also helps protect our officials, who most often are not trained diagnosticians, from ending up in situations at competition where they are expected to practice dermatology.