

12/1/07

Dear HHA players and parents:

The cold weather is here. That means it's not only hockey season, it's "germ season". And germs thrive in any place there are lots of kids close together whether it's a daycare, the school classrooms, or the hockey locker rooms. I've seen plenty of examples of "germ season" already this fall. In the middle of the soccer playoffs mono knocked out several members of an Upper Valley high school team. One week last month an outbreak of strep throat sent home nearly half the students in a local grade-school classroom. There have been no influenza outbreaks yet, but as of last week influenza has been reported in both Vermont and New Hampshire.

In addition to the concerns about the common cold and flu-type germs spreading through the locker room, players and their parents need to be wary of the staph infection called MRSA. You may have read about MRSA in the news. Although community associated MRSA is rarely serious, it's resistance to the standard antibiotics makes it hard to treat and get rid of quickly. That makes it easy to spread through a locker room full of hockey players.

As a hockey parent, coach and local doctor, I want to remind everyone to become diligent about basic germ prevention:

- * wash your hands! Frequent hand washing is probably the most important thing your hockey player can do to prevent any of the germs discussed above. A container of an alcohol based hand cleanser (like Purell) in the hockey bag makes good sense
- * please don't share water bottles
- * cover any cuts or scrapes with a bandage
- * see your doctor promptly for cuts or scrapes that don't heal quickly.
- * dry out the damp (stinky) hockey equipment
- * if you shower, don't share towels
- * avoid borrowing hockey pads

Have a healthy happy hockey season

Michael