Hygiene is always important, but it's particularly important for athletes. Although sharing is usually a great thing to do, when it comes to athletics, it's better not to. Why? Because sharing items can lead to the spread of bacteria, viruses, and fungal infections. The risk of transmission is much higher in sports with a great deal of direct skin-to-skin contact. But, it is also important that the items you use daily to play your sport are cleaned and properly sterilized before each use. Here are some tips from the New York State Department of Health and the athletic training staff here at Millbrook to help decrease the spread of disease.

1. Shower thoroughly with soap after all practices and competitions. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers. If your hands are visibly soiled, wash thoroughly with soap and water. *Clean mouth guards regularly. Rinse mouthguards in water after each use. When you are able, clean them with a toothbrush, toothpaste, and warm water.

2. Do not share towels or other personal items such as clothing, razors, or equipment. Since these items can become contaminated and may spread disease, regularly wash items after each use. *Towels should be cleaned regularly! Recommendations are to launder bath towels after two uses. Millbrook's equipment manager launders students’ practice and game uniforms. Be sure to leave your items in the laundry cart provided for your team.

3. Sports gear, such as helmets that are non-washable, should be wiped down with disinfectant after each use.

4. Ask about routine cleaning schedules for shared equipment, such as towels, uniforms, pinnies, and athletic equipment. *Most shared items can be laundered by the Millbrook School equipment manager.

5. Check your skin regularly for any reddened areas, pimples or boils causing pus, swelling, or pain.

6. Avoid contact with other people’s wounds or bandages.

7. All cuts and other abrasions on the skin should be washed with soap and water and covered with dry, sterile bandages. These bandages should be replaced daily until healed.

8. If you have a wound that cannot be covered adequately, *notify the health center or the athletic training staff. Consider refraining from practice or competitions until the wound can be covered or has completely healed.

9. Tell the *health center, a coach, or athletic trainer if you think you have a skin infection.

10. If an infection is identified, involve appropriate personnel, such as a coach, *the health center, athletic trainers, administration, and/or parents to take proper precautions to avoid the spread of infection.

*There are many types of skin infections - if it looks questionable-ask!

*starred statements are additions or changes made to reflect current practice at Millbrook School