

Eastern Michigan Athletic Training Education Program Communicable Disease Policy

An infectious disease is any disease that results from a microorganism invading the body. There are a number of different microorganisms that can invade the body including bacteria, viruses, parasites, and fungi (Taber's, 2001, p.1087).

A communicable disease is any infectious disease that can pass from one individual to another. Microorganisms are typically passed through direct contact with an infected individual or direct contact with the bodily fluids of an infected individual.

The purpose of this policy is to teach the athletic training student how to prevent the spread of communicable diseases to themselves, student athletes, other members of the Eastern Michigan sports medicine staff, coaches, and support personal.

Communicable Disease in the Athletic Training Setting

It is not possible to prevent exposure from all communicable disease. In the setting of the athletic training room and various athletic facilities, a student athletic trainer will be exposed to a variety of different microorganisms that are capable of passing from one individual to another. However, with the proper precautions, the spread of communicable disease in the athletic training setting may be controlled.

The following guidelines should be followed by athletic training students to prevent the spread of communicable disease:

- Athletic training students should practice universal precautions at all times. All bodily fluids should be treated as if they were potentially infected with some sort of communicable disease. Gloves should be worn when contact is made with any bodily fluids, open wounds, or mucus membranes. Masks and eye protection should also be used if the situation warrants their use.
- Frequent hand washing can help prevent self-infections, and should be practiced regularly by athletic training students.
- Bandages, towels, syringes, or other materials that come into contact with bodily fluids should be properly disposed of in the appropriate biohazard or sharps container.
- Athletic training students should make a sincere effort to keep the athletic training room as clean as possible. Appropriate cleaning supplies should be used to disinfect all counters, tables, chairs, desks, whirlpools, floors, and any other surface in the athletic training room that may be home to microorganisms.

- Athletic training students should practice good personal hygiene.

These practices, if followed by athletic training students, should decrease the spread of communicable disease in the athletic training setting.

There are times when an athletic training student may be at an increased risk for contracting or spreading a communicable disease. During these times, the athletic training student should speak with his or her clinical instructor to determine the best course of action. Keep in mind that the action taken should be in the best interest of all parties involved (the athletic training student, the clinical instructor, other members of the sports medicine staff, student athletes, coaches, and all support personal) and not just the athletic training student.

The following situations and/or conditions may place an athletic training student at an increased risk for contraction or spreading communicable disease:

- Any skin lesions may provide an entry point for a microorganism to enter the body. Skin lesions may also be able to pass microorganisms to another individual by direct or indirect contact. In the athletic training setting, all skin lesions should be properly covered to avoid contact with other individuals.
- If an athletic training student is suffering from an illness, he or she will be considered contagious, and able to pass microorganisms to others. It may be assumed that an athletic training student is suffering from some form of illness if he or she has a fever, is vomiting, or has diarrhea.
- A diagnosis of any highly contagious disease (strep throat, mononucleosis, conjunctivitis...) would put an athletic training student at risk for spreading or contracting microorganisms.
- If an athletic training student has been diagnosed with a chronic blood borne pathogen (HIV, HBV...) he or she may participate in the athletic training setting. However, the student must practice universal precautions at all times.
- Any other chronic medical condition that may result in an athletic training student contracting or spreading a microorganism should be evaluated by physician. The physician should determine the athletic training student's ability to return to the clinical setting.

If an athletic training student feels that he or she may be at risk for contracting or spreading a microorganism, or if the athletic training student's clinical instructor feels that the athletic training student may be at risk for contracting or spreading a microorganism, a physician referral will be necessary. Once a physician referral has been made, the physician will ultimately determine the ability of the athletic training student to continue in the clinical setting.