

Information for those in contact with Group A streptococcal infection

You have been given this information because you have been in contact with a case of group A streptococcal (GAS) infection. Although it is very unlikely that you will be affected by GAS infection, the medical team would like you to be able to recognise the signs of a more serious infection.

What is group A streptococcus (GAS)?

GAS is a bacterium often found in the throat and on the skin. In most people it does not cause any symptoms.

How are GAS infections spread?

The bacteria survive in throats and on hands for long enough to allow easy spread between people through sneezing, kissing and skin contact. People may carry GAS in the throat or on the skin and have no symptoms of illness. This is sometimes known as being colonised.

What kind of illnesses are caused by GAS?

Sometimes serious GAS disease may occur when bacteria get into parts of the body where bacteria usually are not found, such as the blood, muscle, lungs or the birth canal after childbirth. These infections are called invasive GAS disease. Two of the most severe, but rare, forms of invasive GAS disease are necrotising fasciitis and Streptococcal Toxic Shock Syndrome.

Why does invasive GAS disease occur?

Invasive GAS infections occur when the bacteria get past the defences of the person who is infected. This may occur when a person has sores or other breaks in the skin that allow the bacteria to get into the tissue, including just after childbirth, or when the person's ability to fight off the infection is reduced because of long-term illness or an illness that affects the immune system. Also, some types of GAS are thought to be more likely to cause severe disease than others.

Am I at risk of getting invasive group A streptococcal disease from close contact with a patient with iGAS?

Most people who come into contact with GAS remain well and symptom-free, or develop mild throat or skin infections. These infections can be easily treated by your GP.

Healthy people can get invasive GAS disease from a relative or a member of their household but it is very rare. Certain groups of people might be more at risk of contracting a more serious infection, for example, people who have recently given birth, or had surgery.

What do I need to be aware of?

The most important thing to be aware of are the early signs and symptoms of invasive disease, which are known in the box below:

- High fever
- Severe muscle aches
- Pain in one area of the body
- Redness at the site of a wound
- Vomiting or diarrhoea

What should I do if I develop any of these symptoms?

If you develop any of these symptoms contact your GP or seek medical advice immediately. Tell your GP that you have been in contact with someone recently diagnosed with invasive GAS disease and that you have developed some symptoms that you are worried about. It is very likely that your GP will ask you to come into the surgery so you can be examined. If you are too unwell to visit the surgery or it is closed you should not delay in seeking medical advice.

Most people who come into contact with GAS remain well and symptom-free, or develop mild throat or skin infections. Contracting invasive GAS disease from a close contact is very rare.

Sources of information

You can also obtain useful information from the following websites:

GOV.UK

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/group-a-streptococcal-infections-guidance-and-data>

NHS

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/strep-a/>

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4784 or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

Dr Diana Amoiridou, Consultant Microbiologist

The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet:

Trust Infection Prevention & Control Group

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