

Information leaflet for contacts of patients with Invasive Group A Streptococcal infection (iGAS)

What is Group A Streptococcus (GAS)?

Group A Streptococcus (GAS) is a bacterium (or germ) that can often be found in a person's throat or on their skin. People may carry GAS bacteria in their throat or on their skin and may not be ill.

How is it spread?

GAS spreads between people through sneezing, kissing and skin contact. People who are already sick with GAS are most likely to spread the infection. Healthy people who carry the bacteria but have no symptoms are much less likely to spread the bacteria.

What are the signs and symptoms of GAS?

Group A Streptococcus (GAS) infections cause symptoms such as:

- Sore throat
- Fever
- Minor skin infections
- Scarletiform rash

What kinds of illnesses are caused by GAS?

Most GAS infections are fairly mild illnesses such as “strep throat”, scarlet fever and impetigo (skin infection). It is very unusual for it to cause other severe infections. Some people can carry GAS in their throat and have no symptoms – this is called ‘colonisation’.

However, GAS sometimes causes infections if it enters the body. It is very unusual for GAS to cause more severe illness, but it can happen if GAS enters the body. These infections are called ‘**invasive GAS disease**’ which can be very serious and even life-threatening. Invasive GAS (iGAS) is a notifiable infectious disease.

What is a close contact of invasive GAS (iGAS) disease?

A close contact of invasive GAS disease (iGAS) is defined as someone who has had prolonged contact with the case in a household-type setting during the 7 days before onset of symptoms and up to 24 hours after initiation of appropriate antimicrobial therapy in the index case.

Examples of such contacts would be those with an overnight stay in the same household, (including extended household if the case has stayed at another household), pupils in the same

dormitory, intimate partners, or university students sharing a kitchen. For a care home, a close contact is defined as someone sharing a bedroom.

What is a high-risk close contact of invasive GAS disease?

Close contacts considered high risk and eligible for antibiotic chemoprophylaxis include the following high-risk groups:

- Older persons (≥ 75 years)
- Pregnant women ≥ 37 weeks gestation
- Women within 28 days of giving birth
- Neonates (up to 28 days old)
- Individuals who develop chickenpox with active lesions within the time period of 7 days prior to diagnosis in the iGAS case or within 48 hours after commencing antibiotics by the iGAS case, if exposure ongoing.

What should I do if I have been in contact with somebody with invasive GAS (iGAS) disease?

If you have been in close contact with somebody with invasive GAS (iGAS) disease you will be **contacted and advised by your Area Public Health Team**. You will be given this information leaflet.

1. If you are well and have no symptoms, you most likely will remain well.

However, if you become unwell and develop symptoms of GAS within 30 days of diagnosis of the index case, you should seek medical advice.

2. If you have symptoms of mild GAS infection (i.e. sore throat, fever, minor skin infections, scarlatiniform rash), you may be prescribed antibiotic treatment. It is important that you complete the course of antibiotics that is prescribed.

3. If you have symptoms of more severe infection described below, you should seek medical advice urgently advising them that you have been in contact recently with a person with invasive GAS (iGAS) disease. **Trust your instincts. iGAS is a serious infection that can lead to sepsis.**

Symptoms include:

- High Fever (38 degrees Celsius or higher)
- localised muscle tenderness or severe muscle aches
- Increasing pain, swelling and redness at site of wound
- Unexplained diarrhoea or vomiting

**Call 999 or 112 or go to your GP
urgently if you have symptoms of
more severe infection**

What can I do to prevent the spread of iGAS infection?

- Washing your hands - especially after coughing and sneezing - and before preparing foods or eating - reduces the spread of all types of GAS infection.
- People with "strep throats" should stay at home for 24 hours after taking an antibiotic.
- Anyone with signs of an infected wound, especially if fever occurs, should seek medical care.

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