

Invasive Group A Streptococcal disease (iGAS)

Information for people who are close community contacts of someone who has iGAS

Introduction

This leaflet will help give you and your family a better understanding of Invasive Group A Streptococcus infection (also called iGAS).

What is Group A Streptococcus (GAS)?

Group A Streptococcus is a bacterium often found in the throat and on the skin.

How is GAS spread?

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

What kinds of illnesses are caused by GAS?

Most GAS infections are relatively mild illnesses such as 'strep throat', or a skin infection such

as impetigo. On rare occasions, these bacteria can cause other severe diseases.

What is invasive Group A Streptococcal disease (iGAS)?

Sometimes severe GAS disease may occur when bacteria get into parts of the body where bacteria are usually not found, such as the blood, muscles or the lungs. These infections are known as invasive Group A Streptococcal disease and may include serious conditions, such as toxic shock syndrome.

Why does invasive Group A Streptococcal 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, or when the person's ability to fight off the infection is decreased because of



chronic illness or an illness that affects the immune system. Also, some strains of GAS are thought to be more likely to cause severe disease than others.

Am I at risk of getting Group A Streptococcal disease from close contact with a relative or household contact?

Most people who come into contact with GAS remain well and symptom-free or develop mild throat or skin infections. Healthy people can get invasive GAS disease from a relative or a member of their household but it is very rare.

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.

These are:

- sore throat;
- high fever;
- severe muscle aches;
- localised muscle tenderness;
- redness at the site of a wound.

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

If you develop any of these symptoms contact your family doctor (GP) or seek medical advice immediately. Tell your

family doctor (GP) that you have been in contact with someone recently diagnosed with invasive Group A Streptococcal disease and that you have developed some symptoms that you are worried about. It is very likely that your family doctor (GP) will ask you to come into the surgery so they can examine you.

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 relative or household member is very rare.

Further information

If you would like more information on iGAS infection, please contact:

Health Protection Nurse Specialist

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