

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

If you develop any of these symptoms contact your G.P. or seek medical advice immediately. Tell your G.P. 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 G.P. will ask you to come into the surgery so he / she can examine you. If you are too unwell to visit the surgery or it is closed do not delay in seeking alternative medical advice.

**Remember: 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. Public Health England may get in touch with you depending upon your results.**

You can get more information from the Public Health England website or by phoning NHS Choices on 111

### Further questions

Please speak to the ward staff or ask them to contact the hospital IP&C team.

## Comments, compliments, concerns or complaints

South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is concerned about the quality of care you receive and strives to maintain high standards of health care.

However we do appreciate that there may be an occasion where you, or your family, feel dissatisfied with the standard of service you receive. Please do not hesitate to tell us about your concerns as this helps us to learn from your experience and to improve services for future patients.

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

This service aims to advise and support patients, families and carers and help sort out problems quickly on your behalf. This service is available, and based, at The James Cook University Hospital but also covers the Friarage Hospital in Northallerton, our community hospitals and community health services. Please ask a member of staff for further information.

# Group A Streptococcal Infections

Information for patients and household contacts

Infection Prevention and Control

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## Information for patients:

### What is Group A Streptococcus (GAS)?

Group A Streptococcus is a bacterium often found in the throat and on the skin. 5-30% of the population will carry the bacterium on the skin with no symptoms of the disease. This is sometimes referred to as colonisation or asymptomatic carriage. However, it can cause infections that range from mild to life threatening.

### How are GAS spread?

GAS can survive in the throats and on hands for long enough to allow easy spread between people through sneezing, kissing and skin contact.

### What kind of illnesses are caused by GAS?

Most GAS infections are relatively mild such as a sore throat 'strep throat' and skin infections 'impetigo'. On rare occasions these bacteria can cause other severe and even life threatening diseases.

### What is invasive Group A Streptococcal disease (iGAS)?

Sometimes life threatening GAS disease may occur when the bacteria get into parts of the body where they are not usually found. These parts of the body can be described as 'sterile sites' such as the blood, deep tissue, or the lungs.

These infections are termed as invasive Group A Streptococcal disease or iGAS. Two of the most severe and life threatening forms of iGAS are, necrotising fasciitis and Streptococcal Toxic Shock Syndrome.

### Why does iGAS disease occur?

Invasive GAS infections occur when the bacteria get past the defenses 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.

### How do we prevent the spread of GAS?

In hospital if you are told that you have a GAS infection in a wound for example or a blood sample, you will be placed in a single room to help reduce the risk of spread to other patients in the ward. Your doctor will review you and commence antibiotic treatment if necessary. You will need to stay in the single room until you have received 48 hours of the suitable antibiotic treatment. Any staff entering the room will put gloves and an apron on before entering the room, prior to leaving, the

gloves and apron will be removed and their hands will be washed. Your visitors do not need to wear gloves and apron unless they are going to be involved in any direct care, for example assisting with your hygiene needs.

## Information for household contacts of patients:

### Am I at risk of getting iGAS disease from close contact with a relative or household contact?

Most people who come into contact with GAS remain well and symptom-free, or may develop mild throat / 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, which are shown in the box below:

#### Early signs and symptoms of invasive Group A Streptococcal disease

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