

FACTS



Group A Streptococcal Infections

What is it?

Group A streptococcus (strep) bacteria are normally found in the nose and throat of 10% of children and 1% of adults with no sign of illness. In some people the bacteria can cause illnesses like "strep" throat, scarlet fever, pneumonia, and skin infections, such as impetigo. Very rarely it can cause serious infections, such as soft tissue necrosis including necrotizing fasciitis. In Ontario, there is ongoing research to learn more about these serious infections.

How are group A strep infections spread?

They are spread by direct contact with secretions from the nose and throat of an infected person or direct contact with secretions from infected sores on the skin. Casual contact rarely results in infection.

What are the symptoms?

A person may not have any signs or symptoms. If symptoms develop, they may include fever, sore throat, rash, or sores on the skin. It is rare that the illness progresses to severe infection. Infected skin is very painful, red, hot, and swollen and may progress to blister formation with necrosis (death of the tissues). Once a person comes in contact with the bacteria it may take 1-3 days to show symptoms.

What is the treatment?

Group A strep infections are treated with antibiotics. An infected person will no longer be contagious after 24 hours of treatment. The individual can be contagious for 10-21 days without treatment, but if it is a severe infection they may be contagious for weeks or months. Hospitalization may be necessary when severe disease occurs.

How can group A strep infections be prevented?

Good personal hygiene measures, such as frequent hand washing, proper disposal of soiled tissues and thorough cleansing of wounds and cuts are important. People with signs of illness/infection should seek medical attention.

For more information please call Public Health at 376-9420 or 1-800-263-3456.