

# **INVASIVE GROUP A STREPTOCOCCAL INFECTION (IGAS)**

## **What is it?**

Group A streptococcus (GAS) is caused by bacteria often found in the throat or on the skin. Some people can carry these bacteria and have no sign of illness. This germ can cause mild illnesses like strep throat or impetigo.

Sometimes when this germ invades other body parts (blood, muscle, lungs) it can cause more severe disease. These infections are called “invasive” GAS. This includes meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain), necrotizing fasciitis (infection that destroys fat or muscle tissue), and streptococcal toxic shock syndrome (infection that damages organs like the kidneys, liver, and lungs).

## **How is it spread?**

This illness can be spread to others through direct contact with nose or mouth secretions of an infected person. There is a risk of spreading the disease in activities that share body fluids such as open mouth kissing. Contact with infected wounds can also spread the infection.

## **What are the symptoms?**

Typical symptoms are fever, severe body aches, chills, sore throat, dizziness, confusion, rash or abdominal pain. There may be severe pain, redness or swelling around a wound or injured area. A person with iGAS can become very ill within a few hours.

## **Who is at risk?**

Few people who are exposed to GAS develop severe illness. Most will have a routine throat or skin infection or no symptoms at all. Healthy people can get iGAS, but some are at more risk, including those with cancer, diabetes, and people who use medications such as steroids. In addition, breaks in the skin like cuts, surgical wounds, or chickenpox can allow the bacteria to enter the body.

## **What is the treatment?**

When a person has iGAS, they need hospital care with antibiotic treatment.

## **How do I protect others and myself?**

You can help stop the spread of iGAS infections by washing your hands after coughing or sneezing, before preparing foods, before eating, and after using the washroom. If

you have a sore throat that is persistent and severe, see your doctor. Clean wounds and watch for signs of infection – redness, draining, fever, and soreness. If you are prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed by your health care provider.

For more information on prevention of this disease call Public Health at 376-9420 or 1-800-263-3456.