

Group A Streptococcal Infections

ESW – Emergency Service Workers / HCW – Health Care Workers

Disclaimer: This fact sheet provides basic general information only and is to be used as a quick guide, not as a complete resource on the subject. If you have any further questions, ask your health care provider or Infection Prevention and Control advisor.

Group A Streptococcus (GAS) is a bacterium that is normally found in the nose and throat of 10% of children and 1% of adults, without causing illness (carriers). When GAS causes illness, the resulting disease is classified as invasive or non-invasive. Invasive disease (iGAS) causes more serious infections such as necrotizing fasciitis (“flesh-eating-disease”), myositis (inflammation of muscle tissue), pneumonia, and streptococcal toxic shock syndrome (STSS). Examples of non-invasive infections are strep throat, tonsillitis, Scarlet fever, and skin infections such as impetigo. It is not known why Group A Strep sometimes causes invasive disease. Most cases are single episodes; institutional outbreaks occur rarely.

Transmission

All types of Group A streptococcus bacteria are spread by direct contact with large droplet secretions from the nose and throat of an infected person, or from contact of mucous membranes or broken skin with secretions from infected skin sores. It is rarely spread by contact with contaminated objects or through droplets in the air.

GAS can be spread to ESWs/HCWs only if

- fluid from the nose, mouth, or wound/open skin sores of an infected person comes in direct contact with the worker’s mucous membranes or non-intact skin
- an example of this is providing CPR without a mouth piece/mask with a one-way valve.

Prevention

HCWS /ESWs should always use **Routine Practices** to avoid direct contact with the secretions and body substances of all patients. Contact with a patient with suspect or known invasive GAS requires **Droplet and Contact Precautions** until 24 hours after initiation of appropriate antibiotic therapy and until any wound drainage and secretions can be contained.

Symptoms

Once a person comes in contact with the bacteria it takes about 1-3 days to show symptoms. If symptoms develop, they may include fever, sore throat, rash, or sores on the skin. Infected skin is very painful, red, hot, and swollen and may progress quickly to blister formation with necrosis (death) of the tissues. Signs of shock may also be present.



Treatment

Group A streptococcal infections are treated with antibiotics. An infected person will not be contagious after 24 hours of appropriate treatment. ESWs who have been identified as close contacts of an invasive case will be notified by public health. If they had unprotected direct contact with respiratory secretions, skin lesions or wound drainage, they will be advised to see their health care provider about receiving a course of antibiotics to reduce the risk of developing disease.

For more information please call Public Health at 519-376-9420 or 1-800-263-3456.

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