



The following communication is to provide adult social care managers and staff with information around Group A streptococcal infections and the signs and symptoms to look out for.

Group A Streptococcus - what you need to know

Group A streptococcus (GAS) also known as Streptococcus pyogenes are bacteria commonly found in the throat and on the skin. People may carry GAS and have no symptoms of illness or may develop infection.

How is Group A Streptococcus spread?

GAS is spread by close contact with an infected person and can be passed on through coughs and sneezes. People who are currently carrying GAS in the throat or on the skin with no symptoms of illness are described as colonised. Both individuals who are colonised with GAS or who are unwell with a GAS infection can pass these bacteria on to others.

What infections are caused by GAS?

Most GAS infections are relatively mild such as 'strep throat', scarlet fever or a skin infection such as impetigo or cellulitis. However, on rare occasions, these bacteria can get into parts of the body where it is not normally found, such as the blood, muscle tissue or the lungs. This is known as Invasive Group A Streptococcus (IGAS), which can be severe and even life-threatening.

IGAS infection occurs 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.

Signs and symptoms of GAS infection

Be vigilant for signs and symptoms of GAS which include, fever, sore throat, skin infections, nausea and vomiting and severe muscle ache.

How to prevent the spread?

- Good hand and respiratory hygiene are important to stop the spread of infection to others



- If a member of staff suspects they may have GAS infection, they should not come to work until at least 24 hrs after the start of antibiotic treatment to avoid spread of infection to others
- Staff should ensure all cuts / wounds are covered with a waterproof dressing

- Seek medical advice if a service user develops symptoms to ensure timely treatment and reduce the risk of complications

Recommended action if you suspect an outbreak of IGAS in your setting

Contact the UKHSA Health Protection Team for advice

Email: eastofenglandhpt@ukhsa.gov.uk **Phone:** 0300 303 8537

For further information about the infection and treatment:

[Strep A - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

[Group A Streptococcus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Invasive group A streptococcal disease: managing close contacts in community settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)