

This information is for patients, relatives and carers. It explains what Group A Strep is, how it affects us, how it spreads and what we can do to stop it spreading.

What is Group A Strep?

Group A Strep is a bacterium often found in the throat and on the skin. It is also known as *Streptococcus pyogenes*.

How does it spread?

Mainly through sneezing, kissing and skin contact.

Some people may carry it without any symptoms of illness - this is known as colonisation. In other people, the bacterium can cause illness - this is known as being infected.

What infections does it cause?

Most are mild infections such as sore throats or skin infections such as impetigo or cellulitis.

Rarely, more serious infections called invasive Group A Strep can occur.

What is invasive Group A Strep disease?

This occurs when the bacterium gets into parts of the body where it is not usually found, such as the muscles, lungs or blood.

Why does invasive Group A Strep occur?

It occurs when the bacterium get past the defences of the person who is being infected. This can be due to sores or breaks in the skin which allow the bacteria into the deep tissue or blood stream,

or when the person's ability to fight infection is decreased due to chronic illness or an illness that affects their immune system.

I have been told that I have Group A Strep infection; what will happen to me now and how will it be treated?

Depending on where the infection has been identified and how severe the symptoms are, you will be given antibiotics either as tablets or intravenously.

If you are in hospital, for the first 48 hours of treatment you will be in isolation. This will be in a single room. It may be longer depending on the severity of the infection.

During this time, the staff caring for you will wear disposable aprons and gloves and will wash their hands before and after giving you care. This is to prevent the infection being transferred to another patient.

You can help by regularly washing your hands with soap and water or using the alcohol hand rub during the day.

Always wash your hands:

- before eating
- after going to the toilet
- after coughing or sneezing
- when you cough or sneeze, use disposable tissues (staff will provide these) – throw these away into a bin after each use

May I have visitors?

Yes, it is rare for anyone who has been in close contact with you to catch it. However, we ask visitors who are unwell to stay away until they are better (e.g.

if taking antibiotics or have an upset stomach, heavy cold or chest infection). If you are in doubt, you should discuss this with the staff looking after you

- your visitors will be asked to report to the nurse in charge before visiting
- if they are going to visit other patients in the hospital, it is advisable that they visit them before visiting you
- your visitors do not need to wear any protective clothing, e.g. gloves and aprons, unless carrying out personal care or unless you are visiting another patient
- visitors should always wash their hands or use the alcohol hand rub before and after visiting
- please do not let your visitors sit or lie on your bed
- please do not let them touch your wound or device, such as a drip or catheter
- visitors should also use the public toilets and not the one in your room

Can my washing be sent home?

Yes, laundry can still be taken home and washed as usual. Wash soiled laundry on a separate cycle and at 60°C if the fabric will withstand the temperature.

Can I go home with Group A Strep?

Yes, you will wait until your medical team are satisfied that you are fit for discharge. They will let you know if you need to continue treatment at home.

Group A Streptococcal Infections (Group A Strep / Streptococcus pyogenes)

Patient and visitor information

When you go home you should:

- continue to wash your hands with soap and water
- carry out your personal hygiene regularly
- advise your family to wash their hands with soap and water if they have helped care for you

I have been told I am a contact of severe Group A Strep infection; what should I do?

The staff member who told you that you are a contact will explain that though it is very unlikely for you to get infected there are symptoms to look out for:

- high fever
- severe muscle pains
- pain in one area of the body
- redness at the site of a wound
- vomiting or diarrhoea

What should I do if I get any of these symptoms?

Seek medical advice immediately. Tell them you are a contact of someone recently diagnosed with an invasive Group A Strep infection and you have now developed some symptoms that you are worried about. The doctor will probably want to see you in person.

Remember most people in contact with Group A Strep remain well and symptom free or may develop only mild throat or skin infections.

Further questions:

The hospital has an Infection Prevention and Control Team (IPACT), they are:

Sarah Prevett - Lead Nurse, Infection Control
Nikki Cross - Infection Control Specialist Nurse
Consultant Microbiologists (through University Hospitals Sussex)
Nicky Reeves - DIPC (Director of Infection Prevention and Control)
Gilly Bradley - Administration Assistant, IPACT

Should you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of staff caring for you or contact them directly.

Infection Prevention and Control Team
Tel: 01342 414341 or 01342 414423

If you'd like to find out how you can support QVH, please visit www.supportqvh.org



Please ask if you would like this leaflet in larger print or a different format.

References:

Dumfries & Galloway NHS Trust. Strep A Information leaflet. 2012.
HPA. GAS hospitals guidelines. 2010.
 IPACT

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