

## **Strep A - What you need to know about Group A Strep invasive disease**

### **What is Group A Strep?**

Group A Strep is a bacterium often found in the throat and on the skin.

### **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.

### **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 deeper tissues such as the lungs or blood.

Two of the most severe, but rare forms of invasive Group A strep disease are necrotising fasciitis and toxic shock syndrome.

### **I have been told 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.

For the first day or two of treatment you will be in isolation. This is likely to be in a single room.

During this time the staff caring for you will wear disposable aprons and gloves. This is to prevent the infection being transferred to another patient.

You can help by regularly washing your hands 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 - throw these away each time. Staff will provide these.

### **Are people who have been in contact with me at risk of getting Group A Strep?**

It is rare for anyone who has been in close contact with you to catch it.

Your visitors may be asked to wear disposable gloves and aprons while you are in isolation (visitors should ask staff what to do before visiting).

Visitors should always wash their hands or use the alcohol hand rub after visiting.

*continued overleaf*

## **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 invasive Strep A disease. The doctor will probably want to see you in person.

## **Group A Strep and having a baby**

Though rare, Group A Strep can cause infections in mothers after childbirth and in new born babies.

If you get a Group A Strep infection during your pregnancy you will be given an antibiotic to treat it which will not affect your baby.

When you are having your baby tell the midwife or doctor that you have had an infection treated. It should already be documented in your notes. If you or your baby develops a Group A Strep infection within 28 days of the birth both you and your baby will be given an antibiotic. This is because the bacterium can pass between you.

**Remember** - that though Invasive Group A Strep infection is serious at the time of birth it is rare and can be treated with antibiotics.

## **For further information contact: -**

Infection Control Team - Tel: 01387 241627

Health Protection Team – Tel: 01387 272724

Both teams are happy to discuss any questions or issues with patients or visitors.

## **Other sources of information:**

NHSinform – Tel: 0800 224488 (8am – 10pm) [www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot)

Health Protection Scotland – [www.hps.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk)

This leaflet is also available on request in other formats by phoning 01387 241627