Streptococcal infections
(Group A Strep)

Infection Prevention

Patient information

It’s OK to ask: Please feel free to remind your healthcare worker about cleaning their hands.

What is a Group A streptococcal (GAS) infection?
GAS infection is caused by bacteria called Streptococcus pyogenes. These bacteria can cause many different infections at different sites of the body.

Some GAS infections can be minor such as a throat or skin infection while others can have serious complications.

What are the signs and symptoms?
Symptoms are dependent on the type and site of infection and may include:

- strep throat (pharyngitis): sore throat, fever and swollen glands (lymph nodes) around the neck
- cellulitis: painful, red and tender skin, swelling at the infected site and fever
- Impetigo (school sores): blisters—typically around the nose and mouth, and fever

In rare cases, GAS can cause severe disease, including:

- Scarlet fever (rash and high fevers)
- damage to the heart or kidneys
- sepsis (infection in the bloodstream)
- invasive skin conditions including flesh eating disease (very rare)

Severe untreated GAS infections can be fatal.

How is GAS spread?
The bacteria can spread from person to person in two ways:

- in small droplet particles from someone with a throat infection. e.g. when the infected person coughs or sneezes.
- directly touching infected areas of skin.

A person may be contagious for days, weeks or even months if the infection is left untreated. Treatment with antibiotics can reduce this period to 24 hours.

How will I be cared for whilst in hospital?
Isolation: Initially, you may be cared for in a single room. Staff will wear a gown and gloves when entering your room and during your care.
If the infection is in your throat, they will also wear a mask. This is to reduce the risk of spreading the bacteria to other patients the staff are also caring for.
**Streptococcal Infections (Group A Strep)**
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**Contact information**
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**Hand hygiene:** Staff, patients and visitors must clean their hands every time they enter or leave a room or cubicle. Soap and water, or an alcohol based hand rub may be used to clean hands.

**It’s OK to ask:** Please feel free to remind your health care worker to clean their hands.

**Cleaning:** Your room may be cleaned more frequently, with particular attention given to surfaces that are frequently touched.

**As a patient, what should I do?**
Your visitors may initially need to wear a mask and eye protection for close contact with you (i.e. within 1 metre). Staff will show your visitors how to wear these.

- cover your nose/mouth with tissues when coughing or sneezing. Throw these into the bin straight away.
- always wash or disinfect your hands immediately afterwards.
- staff might ask you to wear a mask when leaving your room.
- always clean your hands before and after touching any infected skin wounds you may have.

**What do my visitors need to do?**
Your visitors may be at risk of catching a GAS infection from you.

They may need to wear a mask and eye protection for close contact (i.e. within 1 metre) if you have a throat infection. Staff will show your visitors how to wear these.

If you have a skin infection, they should avoid touching the affected area.

All visitors to the hospital should clean their hands with soap and water, or the alcohol based hand rub. It is important to do this before entering your room, when caring for you, and immediately before leaving your room.

**Further information:**
Better Health Channel
www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

National Safety & Quality
www.safetyandquality.gov.au/

Health Victoria

If you would like to provide feedback or request a copy in a different format, contact us at patient.info@alfred.org.au