

What are Group A Streptococcal Infections?



A Guide for Patients and Their Carers

Patient Information Leaflet

What are group A Streptococci (Strep A)?

Group A streptococcal infections are caused by a bacterium (germ) called *Streptococcus pyogenes* which is commonly found on the skin or in the nose and throat.

How will I know if I have a group A strep infection?

Group A strep can cause mild to life threatening infections.

Mild group A strep infections include:

- sore throats
- skin / soft tissue infections such as impetigo and cellulitis resulting in skin rashes
- scarlet fever

Severe but more rare group A strep infections include:

- a severe infection that results in the death of soft tissues underneath the skin (necrotising fasciitis).
- a severe infection that results in low blood pressure and can cause failure of body organs (streptococcal toxic shock syndrome)

There are also other types of infections that can occur due to group A strep. The doctor looking after you will tell you if you are thought to have one.

How did I get a group A strep infection?

Group A strep infections are spread by droplets from the nose and throat of infected people through coughing, sneezing, talking and laughing or by direct contact with infected wounds / skin infections. Breaks in the skin (cuts, wounds, lesions) are often a route for the bacteria to enter the body.

What will happen to me?

You may be asked to move into a side room whilst your infection is being treated to prevent spread of the infection to others. Staff may wear aprons and gloves when caring for you particularly if you have an infected wound that they are treating.

How is a group A strep infection treated?

Antibiotics are used successfully to treat most group A strep infections. In the case of necrotising fasciitis surgical removal of the infected tissue is required along with an intensive course of antibiotics.

Can it affect my visitors?

If you have a serious group A strep infection the staff will advise if you can have visitors. Please remind your visitors to carry out hand hygiene on entering and leaving your room.

How do I prevent passing group A strep to other people?

You can help prevent spreading the infection to others by following the simple steps below:

- Not touching or squeezing infected skin as this may spread the bacteria to your hands.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, put the tissue in the bin at once and then wash your hands.
- Clean your hands frequently with liquid soap and water or hygienic hand rub.
- Ask visitors and others in contact with you to wash their hands.

Can I go home with a group A strep infection?

You can go home with a group A strep infection once you are well enough. Most mild group A strep infections can no longer be spread to others after the first 2 days of a course of antibiotics. It is important to complete your antibiotic course and to continue to follow the advice above to reduce the risk of spreading the infection to others.

Should you have any further questions or require further advice please speak to your doctor, nurse or Infection Prevention staff.

Infection Prevention Team 01535 294848

Write any questions/queries below

The Public Health England website and will give further guidance and information: <https://www.gov.uk/health-protection/infectious-diseases>

If you require this leaflet in other languages or formats please telephone the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on: 01535 294019 for advice.

Please raise any issue you may have about your care and treatment with a member of staff. Raising your concerns will not adversely affect the care you will receive.

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