

Information leaflet for those in contact with Group A Streptococcal (GAS) infection

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact: The Infection Prevention and Control Team, York telephone: 01904 725860, York Hospital or Scarborough telephone: 01723 342395, Scarborough Hospital

You have been given this leaflet because you have been in contact with a case of Group A Streptococcal (GAS) infection. Although it is very unlikely that you will be affected, the medical team would like you to be able to recognise the signs of a GAS infection so that you can seek help if necessary.

What is GAS?

GAS is a bacterium often found in the throat and on the skin. In most people, it does not cause any symptoms.

How are GAS infections spread?

The bacteria survive in throats and on hands for long enough to allow easy spread between people through sneezing, kissing and skin contact. People may carry GAS in the throat or on the skin and have no symptoms of illness. This is known as being colonised.

What kind of illnesses are caused by GAS?

Most GAS infections are relatively mild illnesses such as a sore throat (called 'strep throat') or a skin infection such as impetigo. On rare occasions, these bacteria can cause other more severe diseases.

What is invasive group A streptococcal disease (iGAS)?

Sometimes serious GAS disease may occur when bacteria get into parts of the body where bacteria usually are not found such as the blood, muscle, lungs or the birth canal after childbirth. These infections are called invasive GAS disease. Two of the most severe, but rare forms of invasive GAS disease are necrotising fasciitis and streptococcal toxic shock syndrome.

Why does invasive GAS disease occur?

Invasive GAS infections occur 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, including just after childbirth, or when the person's ability to fight off the infection is reduced because of long-term illness or an illness that affects the immune system. Also, some types of GAS are thought to be more likely to cause severe disease than others.

Am I at risk of getting invasive group A streptococcal disease from close contact with a patient with iGAS?

Most people who come into contact with GAS remain well and symptom-free or develop mild throat or skin infections. These infections can be easily treated by your GP.

Healthy people can get invasive GAS disease from a relative or a member of their household, but it is very rare. Certain groups of people might be more at risk of contracting a more serious infection, for example, people who have recently given birth or have had surgery.

What do I need to be aware of?

The most important thing to be aware of are the early signs and symptoms of invasive disease, which are listed below.

Early signs and symptoms of invasive GAS disease

- High fever
- Severe muscle aches
- Pain in one area of the body
- Redness at the site of a wound
- Vomiting or diarrhoea

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

If you develop any of these symptoms contact your GP or seek medical advice immediately. Tell your GP that you have been in contact with someone recently diagnosed with invasive GAS disease and that you have developed some symptoms that you are worried about.

It is very likely that your GP will ask you to come into the surgery so you can be examined. If you are too unwell to visit the surgery or it is closed, you should not delay in seeking medical advice.

Most people who come into contact with GAS remain well and symptom-free or develop mild throat or skin infections. Contracting invasive GAS disease from a close contact is very rare.

Any other questions?

Please ask the ward nurses. They will do their best to help. If they can't help, they will contact the Infection Prevention Department for you.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact the Infection Prevention Team: York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 725860, Scarborough Hospital, Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL or telephone 01723 342395.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website: www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

Owner	Infection Prevention Team
Date first issued	September 2015
Review Date	May 2028
Version	3 (May 2025)
Approved by	Infection Prevention Team
Document Reference	PIL 1398 v3

© 2025 York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. All Rights reserved.

www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk