



Invasive Group A Streptococcus (IGAS)

What is Group A Streptococcus?

- Group A Streptococcus (GAS) are bacteria commonly found in the throat and on the skin.
- The infections can range from mild to severe or even life threatening. A person may have the bacteria without being sick.
- Common mild GAS infections include “Strep Throat” or Impetigo.
- Severe GAS infection happens when the bacteria enter the body where they are not normally present like the blood, muscle, fat, joints, brain or lungs.
- Examples of severe GAS infection are: necrotizing fasciitis (flesh eating disease), toxic shock syndrome, meningitis, and septic arthritis.

Why do severe Group A Streptococcal infections occur?

- Health problems and risky behaviors that weaken a person’s immune system can make severe infection more likely.
- The bacteria may already be living in the nose and throat.
- Some types of the GAS bacteria are more likely to cause severe

infection than others.

How common are severe Group A Streptococcal infections?

- Millions of people will get “Strep Throat” or Impetigo every year but very few will get severe infections.

How is Group A Streptococcus spread?

- The bacteria are spread by direct contact with droplets from the nose and mouth of infected persons or by touching infected sores on the skin.
- Treatment with antibiotics for 24 hours or longer will stop the bacteria from being spread.
- Plates, cups, and toys are not a high risk for spreading the bacteria.

Who is most at risk of getting a severe Group A Streptococcal infection?

- Although healthy people can get a severe infection from GAS, people with chronic health problems such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, HIV, lung disease, people on dialysis, people who take steroid

medications or who abuse alcohol or drugs are at higher risk.

- Anyone with breaks in their skin has a way for the bacteria to enter their body.

How is Group A Streptococcal infection treated?

- Can be treated with different antibiotics.
- Early treatment may reduce the risk of death from severe infection, but even the right treatment cannot prevent death in every case.
- If an antibiotic is prescribed, it is important to take all of the medicine given by your doctor.

Visit your local health center or doctor if the sores do not improve or your child develops fever.

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