

# ***Invasive Group A Streptococcal Disease*** (page 1 of 2)



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The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: [patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk) if you would like a reference list.

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## **Introduction**

The aim of this leaflet is to give patients in hospital and their families a greater understanding of invasive Group A Streptococcus (also called iGAS).

## **What is Group A Strep (GAS)?**

GAS is a bacterium often found in the throat and on the skin.

## **How is GAS spread?**

GAS survives 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 sometimes known as being colonised.

## **What kind of illnesses are caused by GAS?**

Most GAS infections are relatively mild illnesses such as 'Strep throat', or a skin infection such as impetigo. On rare occasions, these bacteria can cause other severe and even life threatening diseases.

## **What is invasive Group A Streptococcal disease (iGAS)?**

Sometimes life threatening GAS disease may occur when bacteria get into parts of the body where these bacteria are not usually found, such as the blood, muscle, or the lungs. These infections are termed invasive streptococcal disease. Two of the most severe, but rare, forms of invasive GAS disease are Necrotising Fasciitis and Streptococcal Toxic Shock Syndrome.

## **Why does iGAS occur?**

Invasive GAS infections occur when the bacteria get past the defences of the infected person. This may occur when a person has sores or other breaks in the skin that allow the bacteria to get into the tissue, or when the person's ability to fight off the infection is decreased because of chronic illness or an illness that affects the immune system. Some strains of GAS are thought to be more likely to cause severe disease than others.

**Infection Control Team**  
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## **Am I at risk of getting iGAS from close contact with a relative or household contact?**

Most people who come into contact with iGAS remain well and symptom free, or develop mild throat or skin infections. Healthy people can get iGAS disease from a relative or member of their household, but it is very rare.

## **What do I need to be aware of?**

The most important things to be aware of are the early signs and symptoms of invasive disease:

- high fever
- severe muscle aches
- localised muscle tenderness
- redness at the site of a wound.

## **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 if you have been in contact with someone recently diagnosed with invasive Group A Streptococcal disease and you have developed some symptoms that you are worried about.

Further information may be obtained from the Public Health England (PHE) website at [www.phe.gov.uk](http://www.phe.gov.uk) or telephone Local PHE South West 030 0303 8162.