

Group A Streptococci

Where do you find it?

- In the throat or on the skin
- Many people, (1 in 4) carry Group A Streptococci harmlessly and do not develop illness.

How can you catch it?

- Usually from close contact with someone who carries the bacteria.
- It can be spread easily between people through sneezing, kissing and skin contact.

Who is a close contact?

A close contact is a person who has prolonged close contact with someone they live with during the 7 days before their illness started.

What does it cause?

- Sometimes a person will develop a mild throat infection or scarlet fever, wound or skin infections, like cellulites or impetigo.
- Very rarely, it can cause severe illness.

When does it become severe?

If the bacteria get into parts of the body such as the blood, the lungs or muscle, it is called **invasive**. Some types of invasive disease are more likely to cause severe illness than others.

Invasive infection occurs when the bacteria get past your usual immune defences. This may happen when you are already ill or have an illness or are on treatment that affects the immune system (this is because illness and some treatments can reduce the body's ability to fight off infection). If you have sores or other breaks in the skin this can allow the bacteria to get into the tissue and cause invasive infection.

Am I at any increased risk of invasive infection?

People at an increased risk of catching invasive Group A Streptococci are people:

- who have had close contact with a person with the infection.
- over the age of 65.
- who have recently had chickenpox.
- with diabetes, heart disease or cancer.
- with HIV infection.
- using some steroids or intravenous drugs.

What are the signs of invasive illness?

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

Can it be treated?

Yes. All invasive illness can be treated with antibiotics, such as penicillin, or erythromycin if you are allergic to penicillin.

What if I have any symptoms?

The most important thing is to be aware of the early signs and symptoms of invasive disease.

- Contact your GP or get medical advice immediately.
- If you have recently been in contact with someone with invasive Group A Streptococci tell your GP.
- Your GP will most likely ask you to come into the surgery to be examined.

Where can I get further advice?



Northumberland, Tyne & Wear
Health Protection Unit
7a Tower House
St Catherines Court
Sunderland Enterprise Park
Sunderland SR5 3XJ
Tel: 0191 516 3333

An information leaflet prepared by:

**Northumberland, Tyne & Wear Health Protection Unit,
South of Tyne Office**

In conjunction with:

**Gateshead Council
South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
Sunderland Council**

What you need to know about



Group A Streptococci

Group A Streptococcus is the name given to a kind of bacteria that are sometimes found in the throat and on the skin.

They usually cause a mild illness such as sore throats and skin infections. However, on very rare occasions, these bacteria can cause severe and life-threatening diseases.

This leaflet tells you about:

- what it is,
- how it affects the body,
- what are the risks, and
- the symptoms and treatment