

FACT SHEET

Group A Streptococcal Disease (GAS)

Group A streptococcus (GAS) is a bacterial illness in found mainly in humans. In the United States, there are several million cases each year. It causes a variety of common diseases such as Strep throat (sore throat/tonsils and lymph nodes) scarlet fever, impetigo and pyoderma and as well as more severe diseases like pneumonia, necrotizing fasciitis or streptococcal toxic shock syndrome. <http://www.cdc.gov/groupAstrep/about/faqs.html>

Cause: Streptococcus *pyogenes* or Group A streptococcus (GAS).

Symptoms: Sudden onset of fever, sore throat, inflamed tonsils (pharyngitis/tonsillitis), tender lymph nodes are present. Tiny red spots called petechiae can appear in the mouth and on the tongue (strawberry tongue). GAS also causes skin conditions such as cellulitis, erysipelas, and scarlet fever which appears as a red sandpaper type rash with symptoms. Impetigo and pyoderma skin infections present as vesicles (small fluid –filled blisters) or pustules (pus filled vesicles) that pop, weep and form crusts, then fall off. Severe illness may happen if the bacteria enters the blood, muscle or lung tissue.

Spread: Transmission occurs through respiratory droplets (talking, coughing, and sneezing) and close or direct contact; occasionally through indirect contact with respiratory secretions from items used by an infected person. Hospital outbreaks from infected healthcare workers and contaminated food have also been found as sources of infection.

Incubation: 1 to 5 days for pharyngitis; 7-10 days for impetigo.

Precautions: Standard precautions in the health care settings; if strep throat exclude from work/school until person has been treated for 24hrs with an antibiotic. Persons with impetigo or pyoderma should be excluded from school or childcare until seen by a healthcare provider (if child is at school, exclude at the end of the day until seen by physician). Good hand washing after being in contact with sores, bandages, or laundry will help control the disease.

Diagnosis and Treatment:

Diagnosis is made by culturing the bacteria from various specimen forms (throat swabs, blood, wounds) or by the use of rapid antigen tests. Treatment will be dependent on the form of GAS. Non-pharyngitis are sometimes treated with topical ointments or an

antibiotic bot prescribed by a physician. Pharyngitis is also treated with antibiotic.

Prevention:

Handwashing is one of the single most effective means of preventing the spread of diseases. GAS can be prevented with good handwashing especially after coughing, sneezing, before preparing foods or eating. If you have been diagnosed with strep throat you will need 24hours of antibiotics before returning to work or school to make sure you prevent spreading the infection to others. Cover wounds if possible; if redness, swelling or fever develops see your physician.