

INVASIVE GROUP A *STREPTOCOCCUS* (GAS)

What is invasive GAS?

There is a group of bacteria called group A *Streptococcus* (also called group A strep) which can cause many different infections from minor illnesses to serious life-threatening diseases. Invasive GAS disease occurs when the bacteria have invaded normally sterile parts of the body such as blood, cerebrospinal fluid (liquid in the ventricles of the brain and around the spinal cord), pleural fluid (liquid between the layers of the pleura which are membranes that line the thorax and surround the lungs), deep muscle and fat tissues, or the lung. Invasive GAS infections include pneumonia (in the lungs), bacteremia (in the blood) in association with skin infection, nonfocal bacteremia, deep soft tissue infections, meningitis (of the meninges that line the brain and spinal cord), peritonitis (of the membrane that lines the inner abdominal wall and encloses organs in the abdomen), osteomyelitis (of the bone or bone marrow), septic arthritis (of the joints), postpartum sepsis (within 6 weeks of delivery of baby), neonatal sepsis (in infants younger than 90 days old), and STSS (toxic shock syndrome).

What are the symptoms of invasive GAS?

It depends on the part of the body involved. For example, invasive GAS is thought to be the most common cause of necrotizing (causing the death of tissues) fasciitis (inflammation of the fascia which are tissues under the skin around muscles, nerves, fat and blood vessels) which can often have quickly developing and confusing symptoms such as a red or swollen area of skin, severe pain including beyond the area that is red or swollen, and fever. Later symptoms can include ulcers, blisters, black spots on the skin, changes in color of the skin, pus or oozing, dizziness, tiredness diarrhea or nausea.

How is invasive GAS spread?

Most cases of invasive GAS occur randomly. For example, it is very rare for someone with necrotizing fasciitis to spread infection to other people.

How long are people contagious?

People with invasive GAS are generally not contagious.

Who gets invasive GAS?

Invasive GAS is rare and even though anyone can get it, most people who get this illness have other health problems that lower their body's ability to fight infections such as diabetes, kidney disease, cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver, or cancer.

What treatment is available for people with invasive GAS?

Prompt treatment is key. For example, necrotizing fasciitis requires hospitalization that typically includes antibiotics and sometimes surgery to remove the dead tissue, depending on how quickly the person is seen.

Do infected people need to be kept home from school, work or daycare?

If you are a foodhandler or healthcare worker you should not go to school, daycare, or work until antibiotics have been taken for at least 24 hours. How sick you are and getting well will be the focus of getting you back to work or school

How can I protect myself and my family from getting invasive GAS?

Practicing good hygiene, like washing your hands often, is the best way to protect yourself from group A strep infections.