

Understanding Strep A and iGAS: A Guide for Care Homes



What is GAS (Group A Streptococcus)?

Strep A is a bacterium commonly found in the throat and on the skin. While it usually causes mild infections such as strep throat or impetigo, if untreated, it can progress to more serious, invasive disease.

What is iGAS (Invasive Group A Streptococcus)?

Invasive Group A Streptococcus (iGAS) occurs when GAS bacteria invade normally sterile parts of the body, such as the bloodstream, deep tissues, or organs. This can lead to severe infections like bloodstream infections (sepsis), pneumonia, necrotising fasciitis (a rapidly progressing skin and tissue infection), and toxic shock syndrome. **iGAS infections require urgent medical attention.**

Symptoms of GAS and iGAS Infections

GAS Infections:

Sore throat

Headache

Fever

Swollen and tender lymph nodes

Red rash (in the case of scarlet fever)

General malaise

Skin / wound infections

iGAS Infections:

High fever

Chills

Severe pain or swelling at the infection site

Dizziness

Confusion

Difficulty breathing

Altered mental state

Rapid deterioration within a short period of time

Transmission

GAS and iGAS are typically spread through respiratory droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze. Transmission can also occur through direct contact with infected skin or wounds.

Preventing the Spread:

1

Hand Hygiene

Encourage frequent handwashing with soap and water.

2

Respiratory Etiquette

Cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, dispose of tissues properly, and promote good respiratory hygiene.

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3. Cleaning and Disinfection

Maintain a clean and hygienic environment by regularly cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, shared items, and high-risk areas.

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4. Isolation Precautions

Implement appropriate isolation precautions for individuals with suspected or confirmed GAS or iGAS infections. This may involve isolating the individual in a separate room or cohorting individuals with similar infections. Please see [Group A Streptococcus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

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5. Safe Handling of Linens and Waste

Handle contaminated linens and waste appropriately to prevent the spread of infection. Use disposable gloves when handling soiled items and follow proper procedures for collection, storage, and disposal.

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6. Monitoring

Monitor infections within the care home. Report suspected or confirmed cases of GAS or iGAS infections to the local Health Protection Team swhpt@ukhsa.gov.uk

Wound Care:

Cleanliness

Keep wounds clean and covered to prevent bacterial growth.

Dressing Changes

Regularly change wound dressings as per healthcare provider recommendations.

PPE

Use disposable gloves and an apron when handling wounds, ensuring that you dispose of them properly afterward. If the wound is positive for GAS you may want to consider wearing a fluid resistant face mask.

Seek Medical Attention:

Timely detection can prevent the spread of infection and allow for appropriate medical intervention. If residents or staff experience any of the above symptoms, seek professional medical advice.

If symptoms are severe or you notice a rapid deterioration in condition, seek urgent medical attention

Remember

Remember, early detection, proper wound care, and adherence to infection prevention practices are key in minimising the risk of Strep A and iGAS infections. If you have any concerns, consult with healthcare professionals for guidance.

For further information please see [Group A Streptococcus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)