

## Group A Strep Infection

### What is group A streptococcus?

Group A streptococcus (GAS) is a bacterial infection of the throat and skin. It usually does not cause any symptoms, but some people get sick with a fever, sore throat or skin infections.

### How does it spread?

People can get sick if they:

- Breathe in the droplets from an infected person coughing or sneezing
- Touch something with the droplets on it, and then touch their mouth or nose.
- Eat food that has been infected, or use the same plate or glass as an infected person
- Touch sores on the skin caused by group A strep (impetigo)

### What are the symptoms?

- Fever
- A sore throat or pain when swallowing (strep throat)
- Skin infection with crusting around the mouth (impetigo)
- Infection with red and swollen skin (cellulitis)

### What illness is caused by GAS?

- Strep throat
- Impetigo - a crusted skin infection usually around the mouth that often affects children
- Cellulitis – an infection causing redness of the skin.

### What is the treatment?

If you feel unwell with some of the symptoms, you may be prescribed a course of antibiotics. It is important that you complete the full course of antibiotics so you get well and so you are no longer infectious.

The doctor may also test you by swabbing your throat to confirm that the cause is group A strep.

### Who is at risk of GAS infections?

Anyone can become infected with GAS. It is more common in children aged 5 to 15 years and in parents or adults in contact with children.

People with breaks in the skin, such as cuts, have a higher likelihood that the bacteria to enter the body and cause infection.

People with long-term illnesses like cancer, diabetes and kidney disease, and those who use medications such as steroids, are at higher risk of serious disease caused by group A strep.

### **What should I do if I have symptoms?**

If you develop any signs or symptoms of GAS, get in touch with your GP.

### **Can I prevent getting ill?**

Practising good hygiene like covering coughs and sneezes, and washing your hands often is the best way to protect yourself and your family.

### **For more information:**

- Phone Healthline, for free advice: 0800 611 116 (translators available)
- Phone Auckland Regional Public Health Service on 623 4600

