

Group A Streptococcal

FACTSHEET

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What is Group A Streptococcal Disease?

Group A streptococcal disease is an illness caused by the bacteria group A streptococcus. People may carry group A streptococci in the throat or on the skin and have no symptoms of illness. Most group A streptococcal infections are relatively mild illnesses such as “strep throat” or impetigo. On rare occasions, these bacteria can cause other severe and even life-threatening diseases, such as Toxic Shock Syndrome.

Who gets Group A Streptococcal Disease?

Group A streptococcal disease can occur in people of all ages. It is most commonly seen in children. Severe illness caused by group A streptococci occur most frequently in people with chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, kidney failure requiring dialysis, and people who use medications such as steroids.

What are the symptoms of Group A Streptococcal Disease?

The symptoms of group A streptococcal disease are dependent on the illness that it is causing. Common symptoms of infection include fever, chills, sore throat, painful swallowing, malaise, headache, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, and skin rash.

How is Group A Streptococcal Disease spread?

The bacteria that cause disease are spread through direct contact with the mucus from the nose or throat of persons who are infected or through contact with infected wounds or sores on the skin. Ill people, such as those who have strep throat or skin infections, are the most likely to spread the infection.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The time it takes for symptoms to appear is relatively short, one to three days after exposure.

Is a person with Group A Streptococcal Disease contagious?

Yes, a person with group A streptococcal disease is contagious until they have been on the appropriate antibiotic for at least 24 hours.

How is the Group A Streptococcal Disease treated?

The treatment for group A streptococcal disease is the administration of antibiotics. For serious illnesses hospitalization, including intensive care unit stays or surgery, may be necessary.

Should a person with Group A Streptococcal Disease be excluded from work or school?

Yes, a person with group A streptococcal disease should be excluded from work or school until they have been on appropriate antibiotics for at least 24 hours.

How can Group A Streptococcal Disease be prevented?

The most important way to prevent group A streptococcal disease is by good hand washing, especially after coughing and sneezing and before preparing foods or eating. Additional measures include not sharing eating utensils or drinking from the same container as another person and avoiding close contact, such as kissing, while someone is ill.

Want more information?

Additional information about group A streptococcal disease and other related topics is available on the website www.cdc.gov The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call 202- 442-9371.