

Group A Streptococcal Infection during pregnancy or after delivery

Patient Information

Infection Prevention & Control

Author ID: IPCT Team
Leaflet Number: IPC 001
Name of Leaflet: Group A Streptococcal Infection during pregnancy or after delivery
Date Produced: July 2019
Review Date: July 2021



What is Group A Streptococcus?

Group A Streptococcus (**GAS**) is a bacterium often found in the throat and on the skin, and in most people it does not cause any symptoms. GAS can be life threatening to women if contracted in the uterus during pregnancy or during/after childbirth.

GAS can be transferred to your genital tract if the bacteria contaminate your hands; for example, when you are caring for family members with colds and sore throats.

Who is at risk of GAS infections?

Anyone can become infected with GAS. However, during pregnancy you may be more susceptible if you experience any of the following:

- Diabetes
- Anaemia
- Prolonged rupture of membranes
- Vaginal trauma, wound haematoma (excessive bruising), caesarean section.

How do I protect myself from the risk of contracting an infection?

- Maintain good personal hygiene at all times
- Wash your hands before and after using the toilet or changing sanitary pads
- Take particular care if anyone in your household has a sore throat, cough or cold.

Signs and symptoms of infection

- Pyrexia (high temperature)
- Hypothermia
- Tachycardia (fast heart rate)
- Breathlessness
- Impaired consciousness
- Abdominal pain
- Signs of infection around wounds
- Diarrhoea and/or vomiting
- Offensive vaginal discharge.

What is invasive GAS?

Invasive GAS occurs when the bacterium gets into parts of the body where it is not usually found, such as the blood, muscle, or lungs.

Two of the most severe, but rare, forms of invasive GAS are Necrotising Fasciitis (a deep tissue infection with tissue destruction requiring surgery) and Streptococcal Toxic Shock Syndrome (an illness with some of the following: high fever, low blood pressure, muddled thinking, body rash as in scarlet fever, diarrhoea and vomiting, difficulty breathing, kidney or liver damage and blood clotting problems).

Why does invasive GAS infection occur?

Invasive GAS infection occurs when the bacterium gets past the body's natural defences. This may occur when sores or other breaks in the skin allow the GAS bacteria to get into the bloodstream and deep tissue, or when the person's ability to fight off infection is decreased because of long-term illness, or an illness that affects the immune system. Some types (called 'strains') of GAS are more likely to cause severe disease than others.

If you are found to be infected with or carrying GAS during pregnancy, you should be treated at the time, and have this clearly documented in your maternity notes. In the post-natal period (first 28 days), antibiotics should be administered to both you and baby if either of you develop suspected, or confirmed invasive GAS infection.

I have been told I have GAS disease - what will happen to me now and how will it be treated?

Depending on where the GAS infection has been identified and how severe the symptoms are, you will be given antibiotics to treat the infection. Very occasionally, immunoglobulin (antibodies that will help you fight the infection, obtained from blood donors) is given as well.

If you are admitted to hospital whilst you have this infection, you are likely to be kept in a single room - not in a bay with other patients. This is to help prevent the infection spreading to others and may only be for a few days. However if the infection is quite severe, then you may need to remain in a single room for a longer period of time.

Hospital workers caring for you may wear disposable gloves, aprons and very occasionally a mask when in contact with you. The protective clothing they wear will depend on which part of your body has the infection, and also what they are actually doing whilst with you.

To help prevent GAS infection spreading to others, it is important you wash your hands with soap and water or use the alcohol hand rub often. If you have a throat infection, it is important that you cough/sneeze into disposable tissues, throw these away promptly and then wash your hands or use the alcohol hand rub.

Are my relatives, visitors, household contacts at risk of getting GAS disease from me?

Most people in close contact with GAS remain well and symptom free, though some develop a sore throat or mild skin infections. Although healthy people can get GAS disease from a relative or a member of their household with GAS, it is very rare.

If your visitors are helping with your care activities then they may also need to wear disposable aprons or gloves, so they should check with the nurses if this is necessary. It is very important that visitors and carers wash their hands or use the alcohol hand rub often, and especially when leaving your room.

Other important times for them to wash their hands or use the hand rub are: before eating, after going to the toilet, and before and after helping you with personal care activities such as washing, dressing, eating or using the toilet.

How would they know if they have developed the infection?

The most important things to be aware of are the early signs and symptoms of invasive GAS disease, which are:

- High fever
- Severe muscle aches
- Pain in one area of the body
- Redness at the site of a wound
- Vomiting or diarrhoea

What should they do if they develop any of these symptoms?

Contact their GP or seek medical advice immediately. Tell the GP they have been in contact with someone recently diagnosed with GAS disease and now have developed some symptoms that are causing concern. It is likely that the GP will want to see them in the surgery. If they are too unwell to visit the surgery or it is closed they should not delay seeking medical advice. It would be advisable to contact the out of hours GP service, or call the NHS 111 service for further assessment.

Remember, most people who come into contact with GAS remain well and symptom free, or may develop mild throat or skin infections.

Contracting invasive GAS disease from a relative or household member is very rare.

If you have any further questions speak to the ward staff or ask them to contact the hospital infection control team

Please use this space to write notes/reminders.

Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends and carers.

Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

The Patient Relations/PALS Manager
Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary
Wigan Lane
Wigan WN1 2NN

Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use and store the information we hold about you, please take a look at our “how we use your information” leaflet which can be found on the Trust website: www.wwl.nhs.uk/patient_information/Leaflets/default.aspx

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, braille and other languages upon request. For more information please ask in department/ward.

© Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust
All rights reserved. Not to be reproduced in whole or in part without the permission of the copyright owner

