



FACT SHEET

Group A Streptococcus

Cobb & Douglas Public Health

This time of year we typically see increases in school absences as a result of cold and flu-type illnesses. One illness of particular concern during this time of year is strep throat. Strep throat is a common illness caused by Group A Streptococcus bacteria. The symptoms typically experienced are nasal congestion, fever, sore throat and cough.

What is Group A Streptococcus (commonly called Strep throat)?

Group A Streptococcus is a germ often found in the throat and on the skin. Most Strep infections are relatively mild illnesses such as "strep throat," or impetigo. In rare cases, Strep becomes severe enough to cause hospitalization or death. People may carry Group A Streptococci in the throat or on the skin and have no symptoms of illness.

How is Strep throat treated?

Strep throat infections can be treated with antibiotics.

How serious is Strep?

Strep throat is a common illness which can cause mild illness, such as Strep throat. However, people who have weakened immune systems due to chronic illness, such as cancer or diabetes are at greater risk for developing severe illness from this infection.

How are Group A Streptococci spread?

These germs are spread through contact with mucus from the nose or throat of persons who are infected or through contact with infected wounds or sores on the skin. You can also get Strep by touching surfaces, such as door knobs and hand rails, which have been contaminated with mucus from the nose or throat of persons who are infected.

Good health habits can stop germs

Good health habits like covering coughs and washing hands can often stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses.

Avoid close contact.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

Stay home when you are sick.

If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.

Cover your mouth and nose.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick. Cough into your sleeve and dispose of tissue properly.

Clean your hands.

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Soap and water is best but use hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

Clean and wipe high use areas.

Take a few moments to clean your desk, keyboards and other high use areas.

Practice other good health habits.

Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

What are the symptoms of a Strep infection?

People with Strep throat usually have symptoms that include a sore throat, fever and swollen lymph nodes. People who have additional symptoms such as dizziness, confusion, and a rash that covers large areas of the body could be developing the more serious form of Strep (also called Invasive Group A Streptococcal Disease) and should see their physician immediately.

Who is most at risk of getting Invasive Group A Streptococcal disease?

Most people do not develop severe Strep infections. However, severe Strep infections occur when bacteria gets into the blood, lungs or muscles of a person whose ability to fight off the infection is decreased because of chronic illness or a weakened immune system. Persons with skin lesions (such as cuts, chicken pox, and surgical wounds), the elderly, and adults with a history of alcohol abuse or injection drug use also have a higher risk for disease.

What can be done to help prevent Group A Streptococcal infections?

The best way to prevent infection is through good hand washing and covering your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing. Additional prevention measures include: not sharing drinks, straws, or silverware; and by keeping wounds clean, covered and dry; and cleaning high traffic surface areas repeatedly. Individuals with symptoms of Strep should not report to work, school or social activities.

Many factors may cause a sore throat. If symptoms persist or worsen, consult your physician. Strep can only be confirmed by a lab test. For more information go to www.CobbandDouglasPublicHealth.org and www.cdc.gov sites for more information.