

# Group A Streptococcus (GAS)

## Infection Prevention and Control Fact Sheet for patients and carers



### What is Group A Streptococcus?

Group A Streptococcus (GAS) is a germ commonly found on the skin and inside the throat. Most people who come into contact with GAS remain well and symptom free or may develop mild throat or skin infections.



### How does it spread?

- As GAS is found in the throat and on the skin, it can pass from one person to another through sneezing, coughing, kissing or skin contact.
- In many people GAS does not cause any symptoms. This is known as being **colonised**.
- In others GAS can cause illness. This is known as being **infected**.



### What kind of illnesses are caused by GAS?

Most illnesses caused by GAS are relatively mild. These include a sore throat (tonsillitis), impetigo (crusted skin infection, usually found around the mouth) or cellulitis (this infection causes redness and discomfort of the skin). Occasionally GAS can cause more severe disease e.g. scarlet fever.



### How is it treated?

Depending on the site of the infection and the severity of your symptoms you will be given the appropriate antibiotics to treat the infection.



### What happens if you are diagnosed with GAS while in hospital?

- ✓ To prevent GAS spreading, it is important to wash your hands with soap and water or use the alcohol hand rub.
- ✓ If a patient has a throat infection, it is really important that they cough or sneeze into disposable tissues, then put them in either waste bin (or in a waste bag provided). It is important to wash hands or use the alcohol hand rub after this.
- ✓ You will be moved into a single room until a minimum of 48 hours of the right antibiotic treatment has been taken and there is a clear improvement in you/the patient's condition.
- ✓ Healthcare workers will wear a disposable yellow plastic apron, gloves and possibly a face mask when providing care.



### What about visitors? Are friends and family at risk?

Most people who are in close contact will remain well and symptom free. If visitors are helping with care they need to speak to the nursing staff to find out if they need to wear disposable aprons and gloves. Friends and family must wash their hands or use the alcohol hand rub frequently and always before they leave the room.

**For more information you or your carer can speak to the nurse looking after you**