



Patient Instructions: Group A Streptococcus – instructions in case of close contact with an infected person

You have been in close contact with a person who has a diagnosed severe Group A Streptococcus infection.

What is Group A Streptococcus (GAS)?

Group A Streptococcus (*Streptococcus pyogenes*), is a bacterium that spreads from the throat via droplets and from a skin infection via the hands between people who are in close contact. The incubation period is usually 1–4 days, but it varies even up to a month.

Mild infections caused by GAS are common, and the most common of them is sore throat with fever also known as “angina” or “strep throat”. The bacteria may also cause a skin infection such as impetigo, scarlet fever, or erysipelas. Especially in young children, the infection may appear as skin infection around the anus or in the vagina and/or vulva. Throat and skin infections may cause epidemics in day care, schools, and families. Sometimes a mild GAS infection may lead to a severe form of the disease.

Symptoms of a severe group A streptococcal infection include high fever, severe sore throat, shortness of breath, rapidly spreading redness of an area of the skin or a limb, intense pain without a clear reason, and poor general health. Broken and infected skin is the most common starting point of a severe GAS infection. Severe forms of the disease, such as sepsis (bacteria growing in the blood), meningitis, or difficult infections of the skin and soft tissue, are rare and always treated in a hospital.

What do you need to do

Monitor your symptoms and seek treatment and examinations if you experience the following within a month

- Mild symptoms of a GAS infection (see above): Contact your local health center or emergency department. Let the healthcare personnel know that you have been exposed to Group A Streptococcus.
- Severe symptoms (see above): Seek treatment immediately, in emergencies call 112.

Maintain good hand and cough hygiene

- Wash your hands with water and soap every time after using the toilet, changing diapers, blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, and always before eating or cooking.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when sneezing, coughing, and blowing the nose. Put the used tissue into the trash and then wash your hands. If a tissue is not available or you don't have time to get one, use your sleeve or elbow to cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.

Further information in Finnish

www.thl.fi A-streptokokki