



## Group A Streptococcal Disease

### Important information for people in prison

Group A Streptococcus is a type of bacteria that lives on our skin and in our body often without causing disease. However, some bacteria can cause infection.

This type of infection has become more common in people in prison in recent months. For most people it will cause skin infections like abscesses or boils. But in some people, it can cause more severe infection.

If you have infected wounds, skin infections or are concerned about them, seek help and advice from your prison healthcare team.



#### **What is it?**

Group A Streptococcus (GAS) is a type of bacteria often found in the throat and on the skin.

#### **What problems does it cause?**

GAS bacteria are a common cause of skin and wound infections, like abscesses and boils. These infections are common amongst people who have injected drugs (in prison or in the community) and people who have tattoos in prison. These bacteria may occasionally cause severe infection including blood-poisoning.

## **How is it spread?**

It can survive in throats and on hands and skin and be easily spread between people through coughing and sneezing, skin contact or sharing injecting equipment.

People may carry it in the throat or on the skin and have no symptoms of illness.

## **Why are we concerned?**

Recently we have seen an increase in cases of infection among people in prison in England including in the more severe cases of invasive disease.

## **What is invasive disease?**

Life-threatening disease can happen when the bacteria get into parts of the body where they are not usually found, such as the blood, wounds and the lungs. This type of infection is called invasive disease

## **Why does this happen?**

Most invasive GAS (iGAS) infections happen when the bacteria get past the skin and other bodily defence.

This may happen when a person has sores or other breaks in the skin such as burns. This means bacteria can get into the body. When this happens, people who have other illnesses such as cancer or HIV might be less able to fight off the infection.

Invasive infection can occur in several ways or when wounds are left untreated; we also know that sharing of equipment used to inject or smoke drugs can be a source.

## **What do you need to know?**

If you have a wound or an injury that damages your skin, you need to seek advice from healthcare. There are other signs and symptoms that you need to be aware of that could tell you that your wound is becoming infected.

## **Signs and symptoms**

Signs and symptoms of invasive group A streptococcal disease include:

- high fever
- severe muscle aches
- localised muscle tenderness
- redness at the site of a wound

If you develop any of these symptoms seek medical advice immediately. If anyone you know develops these symptoms, they should also seek medical advice immediately.



### What can you do?

You can help too by cleaning your cell.

Wash your clothes at the right temperature and ensure clothes are dry.

Change and wash your bedding (this may need to be more frequent if you have a wound).

Wash and shower at least daily.

Wash your hands after using the toilet and before you eat or prepare food.

You should not use the gym if you have an infected wound until you have had 48 hours of antibiotics and/or the wound is covered or healed.

You can continue to have visitors.

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