

Invasive Group A *Streptococcus*

Key Facts about Group A *Streptococcus*

- Group A *Streptococcus* (GAS) is usually found on the skin and in the nose and throat.
- People can have the bacterium and not feel sick. GAS may also cause a mild infection like strep throat.
- GAS can also cause more severe "invasive" infections. Two very serious diseases caused by GAS are necrotizing fasciitis and sepsis.

Early invasive GAS infection

Early signs of an invasive GAS infection may include cellulitis (see picture), or a wound infection. Infected wounds may be painful, have redness and swelling around them, and may drain or ooze.

Necrotizing fasciitis

Necrotizing fasciitis is a rare infection in fatty tissues and muscles of the body that can be caused by many bacteria, including GAS. It usually begins with an infection of the skin (cellulitis), but can progress quickly.

Signs and symptoms of necrotizing fasciitis:

- Fever
- Skin wound or redness on skin that gets much larger over 1 to 3 days
- Skin changes from red to a dark purple color, skin starts to peel
- Blisters of fluid that form on skin
- Skin and muscles that become very painful and swollen

Sepsis

Sepsis happens when GAS infects the blood, and causes a strong reaction from the immune system.

Signs and symptoms of sepsis:

- Fever, chills, or feeling very cold
- Extreme pain or discomfort
- Clammy or sweaty skin
- Confusion or disorientation
- Short of breath
- High heart rate

Necrotizing fasciitis and sepsis both require immediate medical attention.

It is important to contact the doctor immediately or go to the Emergency Room if you think someone may have either of these infections. They will not get better on their own, but can be treated with the quick use of antibiotics. Early treatment reduces the risk of death.

The following people are at higher risk for necrotizing fasciitis and sepsis:

- People with long-lasting illnesses like cancer, diabetes, and kidney disease
- Newborns and the elderly
- People who have just had surgery or an injury
- Alcoholics
- People older than 65
- American Indian/ Alaska Native individuals
- People with immune-compromising conditions

Group A Strep infections can be prevented by:

- Frequent handwashing, especially after sneezing or coughing and before and after eating.
- Keeping wounds and cuts clean.

