

Group A *Streptococcus* (GAS)

Definition:

Group A *Streptococcus* is a bacteria often found in the throat and on the skin. Most GAS infections are mild such as strep throat or impetigo. When invasive, these bacteria can cause severe and life-threatening diseases. Two of most severe but least common forms of invasive GAS are necrotizing fasciitis and streptococcal toxic shock syndrome (STSS).

Signs and symptoms:

Symptoms of GAS include throat and skin infections. Sign and symptoms of necrotizing fasciitis include severe pain and swelling, fever, and redness at a wound site. Signs and symptoms of STSS include fever, localized severe pain, dizziness, flu-like symptoms, confusion, and rarely a large flat red rash.

Transmission:

GAS is spread through direct contact with mucus from the nose or throat of persons who are infected, or through contact with infected wounds or sores on the skin.

Diagnosis:

GAS is diagnosed through laboratory testing

Role of the School Nurse:

Prevention

- Encourage good hand hygiene, particularly after coughing and sneezing and before preparing foods and eating
- Encourage varicella vaccination (GAS can be associated with outbreaks of varicella)

Treatment Recommendations

- Multiple antibiotics can be used to treat GAS, depending on the severity of the illness

Exclusions

- Children with streptococcal pharyngitis or skin infections should be excluded until at least 24 hours after beginning appropriate antibiotic therapy
- Education modifications may be warranted in children with a positive diagnosis

Reporting Requirements

- Invasive GAS infection is a reportable condition. GAS skin and throat infections are only reportable if they reach outbreak levels.

Resources:

- Maine CDC GAS website (including fact sheet) <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/group-a.shtml#>
- Federal CDC GAS website http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/groupastreptococcal_g.htm