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 the 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. Signs 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 12 hours after beginning appropriate antibiotic therapy

**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/GAS](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/GAS)
- Federal CDC GAS website [https://www.cdc.gov/groupastrep/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/groupastrep/index.html)

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