

## Appendix 2: NSW iGAS information for close contacts

(This content of this sheet can be adapted for different settings and audiences)

You have recently been in close contact with a person with invasive group A streptococcal disease (iGAS).

- iGAS is caused by an infection with group A *Streptococcus* (GAS), a type of bacteria often found in the throat and on the skin.
- Although your risk of developing iGAS is low, it is important that you are aware of symptoms to look out for.
- Seek medical attention urgently if you have or develop symptoms

### **What is Group A Streptococcus (GAS)?**

Group A *Streptococcus* (GAS) bacteria – also known as *Streptococcus pyogenes* – are commonly found in the throat and on the skin. People can carry GAS bacteria and have no symptoms of illness or they may develop an infection. GAS infections are usually mild infections of the throat or skin, such as ‘strep throat’ and ‘impetigo’ or ‘school sores’.

### **How is GAS spread?**

GAS bacteria are usually spread between people through coughing, sneezing, kissing, or direct skin to skin contact. People who carry GAS bacteria without any symptoms and people who are unwell with a GAS infection can both pass the bacteria on to others.

### **What is invasive group A streptococcal (iGAS) disease?**

iGAS disease occurs when GAS bacteria get into parts of the body where they are not usually found such as the blood, joints, lining of the brain, or the birth canal after childbirth.

Although iGAS is uncommon, it can be a serious disease and can develop very quickly requiring immediate medical attention.

### **Who is at risk of iGAS?**

Most people who have contact with a person with iGAS remain well and symptom-free. There is some evidence that close contacts of a person with iGAS (e.g. household members, sexual partners, childcare attendees and aged care facility residents) are at higher risk, particularly within 30 days of contact with a person with iGAS. Close contact means a person who had prolonged close contact with a case in a household or household-like setting during the 7 days before diagnosis of iGAS in the case.

While iGAS disease can affect anyone, children less than 5 years old, older people (particularly people aged over 75), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people with chronic or immunocompromising conditions may be at higher risk.

### **Do close contacts of a person with iGAS require treatment?**

Contacts of a person with iGAS do not usually require any treatment if they remain well. Antibiotics may be considered for contacts in some circumstances. If a newborn baby or their mother has iGAS, the other should also be given antibiotics to prevent the disease.

### **What are the symptoms of iGAS?**

Symptoms of iGAS depend on which part of the body is infected, and include:

- Fevers
- Unusual tiredness
- Chills and/or sweats
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath and/or chest pain
- Headache and/or stiff neck
- Nausea and vomiting
- Red, warm, painful, and rapidly spreading skin infection which may have pus or ulceration.

### **What do I do if I develop any of these symptoms?**

A person with iGAS can become very sick within 12 – 24 hours. It is important to seek medical advice immediately if you or someone in your household develops symptoms. Tell the doctor you are a close contact of someone with iGAS and take this letter with you.

If you develop mild symptoms such as a sore throat or minor skin infection without any of the symptoms of iGAS above, see your GP, who can arrange testing and treatment if they think this is required.

If you can't contact your doctor, use the online [Service Finder](#) to find one near you, or call healthdirect on [1800 022 222](tel:1800022222) (free and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

### **How is iGAS prevented?**

Regularly washing your hands with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand rub can help reduce the risk of spreading GAS bacteria. Open wounds should be kept covered with a clean, dry bandage or dressing until they are healed. After changing a dressing, discard used dressings or band aids in the bin and wash your hands.

### **More information**

The following websites can provide further information:

[NSW Health – Invasive group A streptococcus fact sheet](#)

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/Invasive-group-A-streptococcus.aspx>

[Healthdirect – Group A Streptococcal Disease](#)

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/group-a-streptococcal>