

Infection Control Topic: Streptococcus A (GAS) in Long-Term Care Facilities (LTCFs)

Introduction: Group A Streptococcus (GAS) infections are a serious cause of illness and death for adults 65 years of age or older in the United States. Residents of long-term care facilities (LTCFs) are particularly at risk for severe infection and death from GAS infections. Strong infection prevention and control practices are critical to stopping GAS transmission and preventing outbreaks in LTCFs¹.

What is the risk: GAS infections often live and grow on the skin and in the nose, throat and gut¹. GAS can spread short distances through the air and through touch. GAS spreads through respiratory droplets that people exhale when they breathe, talk, cough, or sneeze⁴. These droplets can be inhaled by people close. They can also land on environmental surfaces. GAS can spread germs through direct or indirect contact. Healthcare workers can get Strep A infections either from their household contacts, a resident, or other staff members. A healthcare worker infected or colonized with Strep A can also spread GAS to other staff or residents.

Highlights:

Nursing home residents may develop:

- cellulitis and wound infections
- blood stream infections
- pneumonia
- People over the age of 65 are more likely to die of a GAS infection, about 15% of people over 65 with an invasive infection (like a bloodstream infection) will die.

How are GAS infections diagnosed?

- □ Identify symptomatic and asymptomatic cases
 - Symptoms include:
 - Increased heart rate and low blood pressure
 - Fever or feeling cold
 - New onset or increased confusion
 - Shortness of breath
 - Extreme pain or discomfort
 - Clammy or sweaty skin

Investigating Outbreaks

- GAS should be investigated if one case is presented.
 - Utilize this resource below for investigation GAS outbreaks, Decision Tool for Investigation Group A Streptococcus Infections in Long-term Care Facilities
 - https://www.cdc.gov/group-a-strep/media/pdfs/ltcf-decision-tool-508.pdf

Treatment of Strep A infections.

- Doctors treat GAS with antibiotics. Benefits of antibiotics include:
 - Rapid recovery.
 - Decreasing symptoms (feeling better).
 - Preventing the bacteria from spreading to others.
 - Preventing serious complications like rheumatic fever³.
- □ Residents with GAS should be placed in contact and droplet transmissionbased precautions until 24 hours after effective antibiotic therapy.
 - Wound drainage needs to be contained by a dressing. If indicated.
 - Enhanced-barrier precautions can be utilized after 24 hours of effective antibiotic therapy is complete¹.

Infection control measures.

- □ The best way to keep from yourself getting or spreading GAS is to clean your hands often.
 - o Clean hands, preferably using alcohol-based hand rub/sanitizer.
 - Use personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - Put on a face mask before opening sterile supplies.
 - Wear a face mask with eye protection if doing a task that might result in coughing or sneezing.
 - Wear a gown and gloves if there may be contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials.
 - Use dedicated or single use equipment according to the manufacturer's instructions. (If not possible, ensure appropriate cleaning and disinfection after each use.)
 - Clean and disinfect environmental surfaces.
 - Maintain separation between clean and soiled equipment to prevent cross contamination.
 - Increase audits and observations during an outbreak

• Follow Contact and Droplet Precautions if GAS is suspected or known until 24 hours of antibiotic therapy is completed.

Summary

In conclusion, GAS is a serious threat to residents of long-term care facilities. Strong infection prevention and control practices are critical to stopping GAS transmission and preventing outbreaks in LTCFs.

Reference:

- 1. https://www.cdc.gov/group-a-strep/php/ltcftoolkit/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/groupastrep/outbreaks/ltcf/index.html
- https://www.cdc.gov/group-astrep/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/groupastrep/diseases-public/strepthroat.html#protect-yourself
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