

Invasive group A streptococcal infection (iGAS)

Invasive group A streptococcal infection (iGAS) is a very serious bacterial infection caused by a type of bacteria called Group A *Streptococcus*.

The bacteria can make you very sick if it gets inside parts of your body like your blood, muscles, or the birth canal after a baby is born.

iGAS can make you feel very unwell very quickly, and sometimes it can cause death. It's important to get help quickly.



Signs and symptoms – what you can see and feel

The symptoms of iGAS are:

- high fever (feel hot to touch, uncontrollable shakes, temperature over 38°C)
- headache
- trouble breathing
- severe pain in arms or legs
- sore throat
- red or sore skin around cuts or wounds.



Seeking medical help

If you or someone in your household develops symptoms of iGAS, suddenly becomes seriously unwell or you're feeling concerned in general, please seek medical help quickly. This is especially important if you or the person has recently been in close contact with someone who has iGAS.

Contact your GP or healthcare provider urgently for advice. You can also call Healthline on **0800 611 116**, anytime 24/7 for free health advice and information about what to do next. **In an emergency call 111.**

If English isn't your first language Healthline has interpreters available. If you have a disability or are Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind or have speech communication difficulties please see healthcare services listed at the end of this information sheet.



How iGAS spreads

The bacteria that cause iGAS are often found in the throat and on the skin. People can spread the bacteria when they cough, sneeze, kiss, or have close contact with others. You can have these bacteria even if you don't feel sick.



People at higher risk of iGAS

iGAS can affect anyone, but it's more likely if you've been close to someone with iGAS, like:

- family members or people you live with
- close friends or partners.

Most people who have been near someone with iGAS don't get sick, but they should still watch out for symptoms.



Special advice for parents and babies

If a parent who has given birth or their baby gets iGAS within 28 days of birth, the parent or baby that doesn't have iGAS may need medicine to prevent them from getting sick. A doctor or healthcare provider will help you get the right medicine if needed.



Prevention

You can reduce the risk of getting and passing on the bacteria that cause iGAS by:

- **washing your hands:** Use soap and water, scrub well, and dry them properly
- **covering your wounds:** Keep any cuts clean and covered with a bandage
- **not sharing personal items:** Things like towels, cups, or toothbrushes should not be shared. If you need to share items like towels, make sure you wash them first with laundry detergent.



What should close contacts do?

If you've been near someone with iGAS, you can do all your normal activities but watch out for symptoms of iGAS in the next 30 days.

If you or a household member get a sore throat in the next 30 days, especially if you/they:

- are a Māori or Pacific person and aged between 3 and 35 years old
- have a family member or someone else in your house who has had rheumatic fever before.

It is important you contact your doctor or healthcare provider even if you don't have any other symptoms. Tell them you have been in contact with someone who has iGAS.

If you or a household member get a skin infection in the next 30 days, it is important that you contact your doctor or healthcare provider. Tell them you have been in contact with someone who has iGAS.

If you feel sick in the next 30 days, it's important that you contact your doctor or healthcare provider right away. Tell them you have been in contact with someone who has iGAS. You can also take this information sheet with you to show them.



For free general health advice and information

- Visit the Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora website healthnz.govt.nz/igas
- Call Healthline on **0800 611 116**, anytime 24/7 for free health advice and information about what to do next. You can choose to speak with a Māori clinician if you are calling between 8am and 8pm. Interpreter services and NZ Relay support are also available.
- For people living or visiting rurally, you can contact a doctor after hours at Ka Ora Telecare **0800 2 KA ORA (0800 252 672)** or kaora.co.nz. This service is available from 5.00pm to 8.30am on weekdays, and 24 hours a day on weekends and public holidays.
- Free NZ Relay Services are available at nzrelay.co.nz if you are Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind or have speech communication difficulties.



Disability Immunisation Helpline

- A dedicated helpline for Disability support is available Monday to Friday, between 8.00am and 5.00pm. Call free on **0800 11 12 13** or text **8988** for help and information or visit healthpoint.co.nz/disability-helpline