

Group A Streptococcus Fact Sheet

What is it?

Group A streptococcus (group A strep) is a bacteria that lives on a person's skin or in their nose and throat. Group A strep can cause many different infections. Many people carry the bacteria but never become ill.



How does it spread?

- Through **close contact** with a person who has group A strep.
- These germs can be passed on **through coughs and sneezes** or from a wound.
- **Through food**, if someone with group A strep prepares or serves food that is shared with others.

You can spread group A strep even when you do not have symptoms.



How do I know if I have it?

Group A strep infections can cause many different types of illness, from mild to severe.

Mild illnesses include:

- **Strep Throat:** group A germs infect your throat and cause fever.
- **Impetigo:** group A germs infect your skin and cause open sores.
- **Scarlet fever:** group A germs infect your throat AND your skin causing a rash on the body that feels like sandpaper.

Severe illnesses include:

- **Pneumonia:** infection in the lungs with fever, cough, and trouble breathing.
- **Meningitis:** infection of the layers around the brain, with headache, fever, neck pain, or confusion.
- **Rheumatic fever:** infection that can make the heart, joints, brain, and skin swell.



How can I protect myself?

- **Wash hands often with soap and water.** Use an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not available.
 - After coughing or sneezing
 - Before eating and preparing food
- **Keep wounds clean and covered.** Watch for signs of infection:
 - Increased redness
 - Swelling
 - Pain



How should I take care of myself or someone who has group A strep?

Group A strep is treated with medicine prescribed by your doctor (antibiotics).

- If you see signs of a group A strep infection, you should **seek treatment right away**, because group A strep can become life-threatening if left untreated.
- Stay home to heal and prevent spreading the infection to others.

Practice healthy caregiving habits to protect yourself and others in your home.



When should I call a doctor?

Talk to a doctor right away if you or a family member have symptoms of a group A strep infection. Depending on your symptoms, your doctor may take a throat swab, get a blood sample, and prescribe antibiotics.



To learn more, visit the Group A Strep webpage at www.cdc.gov.

