

Script for First Nation radio announcement on iGAS

Hello, and thank you for joining us today!

Hi everyone, I am _____ (**Insert own introduction**) and I'm joined today by _____ (**Insert others introduction**). We're here to talk about Group A Streptococcus [**strep-tuh-kok-us**], or Group A Strep, and its more serious form, invasive Group A Streptococcal disease, known as iGAS. These are important topics that can affect anyone, so let's dive in.

What is Group A Strep?

Group A Strep is a common bacteria that can cause mild infections like strep throat or skin conditions such as impetigo. However, in rare cases, it can lead to more severe and life-threatening illnesses, like bloodstream infections, pneumonia, or toxic shock syndrome. These invasive infections happen when the bacteria enter parts of the body where they're not normally found, such as the blood, muscles, or lungs.

How Does It Spread?

Group A Strep spreads through droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. It can also spread through direct contact with sores or through shared items like cups, utensils, or towels. Think of how a cold spreads—quickly and easily, especially in close-contact environments like schools or homes.

It's important to know that the bacteria are contagious even before symptoms appear, but after starting antibiotics, the risk of spreading drops significantly within 24 hours.

Who Is Most at Risk?

Anyone can get a Group A Strep infection, but certain people are at higher risk of developing iGAS. These include:

- Elders and pregnant individuals.
- People with weakened immune systems due to illnesses like diabetes, cancer, or HIV.
- Those with recent viral infections, such as the flu or COVID-19.
- People with cuts, burns, or skin conditions like eczema or chickenpox.
- Individuals who use injection drugs or misuse alcohol.

If you or someone in your household falls into these groups, extra precautions are important.

How Can You Protect Yourself and Your Loved Ones?

Early and prompt treatment is the key to preventing complications, community spread and harm to yourself and your loved ones. Other preventative measures that protect yourself and others include:

1. **Stay up-to-date on vaccinations.** Illnesses like the flu and COVID-19 can weaken the immune system, making infections more likely.
2. **Practice good hygiene.** Wash your hands often with soap and water or use alcohol-based sanitizer.

3. **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough or sneeze.
4. **Keep wounds clean and covered** to prevent bacteria from entering the body.
5. **Clean high-touch surfaces regularly**—think door handles, phones, and light switches.
6. **Avoid sharing personal items**, like toothbrushes, utensils, or water bottles.

What Symptoms Should You Watch For?

For mild infections like strep throat, symptoms include:

- Severe sore throat.
- Pain when swallowing.
- Fever and swollen lymph nodes.
- White patches on the tonsils.

Keep in mind that a cough, runny nose, or a hoarse voice is usually caused by a viral infection rather than strep throat.

For iGAS, the symptoms are more serious and can include:

- Severe pain that seems unusual or out of proportion.
- Fever with a rash.
- Dizziness or confusion.
- Trouble breathing.
- Red, swollen, and painful joints or tissues.

If you notice any of these serious symptoms, seek medical attention immediately, as iGAS can progress rapidly—sometimes within 12-24 hours.

What to Do If You're Sick

If you have symptoms of a mild strep infection, stay home, limit contact with others, and contact your healthcare provider. If diagnosed, start antibiotics right away and stay home for at least 24 hours after beginning treatment to avoid spreading the infection. Always complete your prescribed antibiotics to fully recover and prevent spreading the infection, even if you're feeling better.

For severe symptoms or suspected iGAS, get medical help immediately. Treatment often includes IV antibiotics and sometimes surgery for invasive cases.

What If You've Been Exposed to iGAS?

If you are concerned that you may be a close contact to an iGAS case, please call the nursing station. They will review your exposure, provide you with information specific to your situation and determine if you need antibiotic treatment to prevent infection. All close contacts should monitor for signs of infection for 30 days following their last exposure to a case.

In Closing

Group A Strep infections are common, but serious cases of iGAS are rare. By practicing good hygiene, staying vaccinated, and seeking medical care early, we can protect ourselves and our community.

If you have questions or concerns, don't hesitate to reach out to your healthcare provider or local nursing station. Together, we can stay safe and healthy.

Thank you for listening, and take care!

(Expected length: Approximately five minutes)