



ADVISORY

Increased Rates of Invasive Group A Streptococcal Disease (iGAS) in Ontario

Monday, May 29, 2023

Background

The Ministry of Health has been monitoring [increasing trends](#) of invasive Group A Streptococcal Disease (iGAS) in Ontario. Health care providers are urged to remain alert for the signs and symptoms of iGAS when assessing patients with clinical presentation consistent with non-invasive GAS. iGAS is relatively uncommon but can progress rapidly and may be associated with life-threatening conditions including toxic shock syndrome, sepsis, meningitis and pneumonia.

At Risk Population Groups

The increased rates of iGAS have been seen in all age groups across Ontario; however, rates of illness have been highest among individuals aged 0 to 4 and aged 65 and older. The following population groups are at a high risk for iGAS:

- Young children (aged 0-4)
- Pregnant and postpartum individuals
- Older adults (aged 65 and over)
- Folks with immunocompromising conditions
- Individuals who have recently had a viral infection (including chickenpox)
- People experiencing homelessness
- People who use injection drugs

Recommended Action for Health Care Providers

The following actions are recommended for health care providers:

- For any patients presenting with symptoms of non-invasive GAS, assess and treat immediately.
- Be vigilant of any potential complications occurring from GAS infections and consider iGAS as a possible cause of severe illness. This is of particular importance in the above-mentioned high-risk population groups.
- Using tools such as MEOWS (modified early obstetric warning system) can be beneficial in the early identification and clinical management of iGAS in patients that are pregnant.
- Encourage patients and parents/guardians to keep up-to-date on routine immunizations (specifically varicella). For eligible patients, encourage and offer the influenza vaccination.
- Provide education to patients and parents/guardians on the signs and symptoms of severe illness. Inform them on when to seek urgent medical attention.

Clinical Management

Early diagnosis and aggressive treatment measures can be critical when dealing with iGAS. If you suspect iGAS in your patient, please obtain the appropriate specimens for routine bacterial culture or DNA detection by nucleic acid amplification testing (NAAT). Patients with iGAS should receive supportive treatment with fluid intake, antimicrobials

and where needed measures to reduce or neutralize the effects of toxin production. If further support is required during treatment, consultation with an infectious disease physician is advised.

Resources from Public Health Ontario (PHO)

- [Group A Streptococcal Disease, Invasive \(iGAS\)](#)
- [Laboratory Testing- Group A Streptococcal Disease, Invasive \(iGAS\)](#)
- [Recommendations on Public Health Management of Invasive Group A Streptococcal \(iGAS\) Disease](#)

Probable or confirmed cases of iGAS must be immediately reported to Peterborough Public Health as per [Ontario Reg. 135/18](#) and amendments under the Health Protection and Promotion Act. You can do this by calling 705-743-1000, ext. 131 or our after-hours number at 705-760-8127.

This advisory can be found on our website by visiting www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca/health-professionals/.