



## Patient Instructions: Information about severe group A streptococcal disease

You have been diagnosed with a severe group A Streptococcus infection that is treated with intravenous antibiotics in a hospital.

### What is Group A Streptococcus (GAS)?

Group A Streptococcus (*Streptococcus pyogenes*), is a bacterium that spreads from the throat via droplets and from a skin infection via the hands between people who are in close contact. The incubation period is usually 1–4 days, but it varies even up to a month.

Mild infections caused by GAS are common, and the most common of them is sore throat with fever also known as “angina” or “strep throat”. The bacteria may also cause a skin infection such as impetigo, scarlet fever, or erysipelas. Especially in young children, the infection may appear as a skin infection around the anus or in the vagina/vulva. Throat and skin infections may cause epidemics in day care, schools, and families. Sometimes a mild GAS infection may lead to a severe form of the disease.

Symptoms of a severe group A streptococcal infection include high fever, severe sore throat, shortness of breath, rapidly spreading redness of the skin or a limb, intense pain without a clear reason, and poor general health. Broken and infected skin is the most common starting point of a severe GAS infection. Severe forms of the disease, such as sepsis (bacteria growing in the blood), meningitis, or difficult infections of the skin and soft tissue, are rare and always treated in a hospital.

### Your close contacts are at a higher risk of developing the disease

Your close contacts are at a higher risk of developing a symptomatic disease caused by Group A Streptococcus. We need to list everyone you've been in close contact with during the week before the onset of your symptoms. Close contact means a person who lives in the same household with you, or who you have otherwise been in a close contact with. The healthcare professionals will get in touch with your close contacts. They will be asked to monitor their symptoms for a month after their latest exposure and seek treatment and examinations if they experience any symptoms.

### Proper hand and cough hygiene matters

- Wash your hands with water and soap every time after using the toilet, changing diapers, blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, and always before eating or cooking.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when sneezing, coughing, and blowing the nose. Put the used tissue into the trash and then wash your hands. If a tissue is not available or you don't have time to get one, use your sleeve or elbow to cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.

### Further information in Finnish

[www.thl.fi](http://www.thl.fi) A-streptokokki