

Appendix 4: NSW iGAS information for parents/guardians/staff at a childcare facility

XX MONTH 20XX

- iGAS is caused by infection with group A *Streptococcus* (GAS), a type of bacteria often found in the throat and on the skin.
- Although the risk of developing iGAS is low, it is important that you are aware of symptoms to look out for.
- Seek medical attention urgently if your child has or develops symptoms.

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Someone who spent time in **[name of class and facility]** has been diagnosed with invasive group A streptococcal disease (iGAS). Your child may have had close contact with this person. We request that you monitor your child for symptoms of iGAS for the next 30 days (until **XX/XX/202X**). There is no need to keep your child at home if they are well. Please see below for important information on iGAS.

What is group A *Streptococcus* (GAS)?

Group A *Streptococcus* (GAS) bacteria – also known as *Streptococcus pyogenes* – are commonly found in the throat and on the skin. People can carry GAS bacteria and have no symptoms of illness, or they may develop an infection. GAS infections are usually mild infections of the throat or skin, such as 'strep throat' and 'impetigo' or 'school sores'.

How is GAS spread?

GAS bacteria are usually spread between people through coughing, sneezing, kissing, or direct skin to skin contact. People who carry GAS bacteria without any symptoms and people who are unwell with a GAS infection can both pass the bacteria on to others.

What is invasive group A streptococcal (iGAS) disease?

iGAS disease occurs when GAS bacteria get into parts of the body where they are not usually found such as the blood, joints, or lining of the brain.

Although iGAS is uncommon, it can be a serious disease and can develop very quickly requiring immediate clinical attention.

Who is at risk of iGAS?

Most people who have contact with a person with iGAS remain well and symptom-free. There is some evidence that close contacts of a person with iGAS (including childcare attendees) are at higher risk, particularly within 30 days of contact with a person with iGAS.

While iGAS disease can affect anyone, children less than 5 years old, older people (particularly people aged over 75), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people with chronic or immunocompromising conditions may be at higher risk.

Do contacts of a person with iGAS require treatment?

Contacts of a person with iGAS do not usually require any treatment if they remain well. However, if concerned, please contact your doctor.

What are the symptoms of iGAS?

Symptoms of iGAS depend on which part of the body is infected, and include:

- Fevers
- Unusual tiredness
- Chills and/or sweats
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath and/or chest pain
- Headache and/or stiff neck
- Nausea and vomiting
- Red, warm, painful, and rapidly spreading skin infection which may have pus or ulceration.

What do I do if my child develops any of these symptoms?

A person with iGAS can become very sick within 12 – 24 hours. It is important to seek medical advice immediately if your child or someone in your household develops symptoms. Tell the doctor that your child is a close contact of someone with iGAS and take this letter with you.

If your child develops mild symptoms such as a sore throat or minor skin infection without any of the symptoms of iGAS above, see your GP, who can arrange testing and treatment if they think this is required. Please also let your childcare centre know.

If you can't contact your doctor, use the online [Service Finder](#) to find one near you, or call healthdirect on [1800 022 222](tel:1800022222) (free and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

How is iGAS prevented?

Regularly washing your hands with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand rub can help reduce the risk of spreading GAS bacteria. Open wounds should be kept covered with a clean, dry bandage or dressing until they are healed. After changing a dressing discard used dressings or band aids in the bin and wash your hands.

For more information, please see the attached [NSW Health iGAS Fact Sheet](#), or [Healthdirect - Group A Streptococcal Disease](#), or [Sydney Children's Hospital iGAS Fact Sheet](#)

You can also call the Public Health Unit on [<phone>](#)

Yours sincerely

Director, Public Health Unit