

Group A Strep

HEALTH WARNING FOR HOMELESS SERVICE PROVIDERS

WATCH FOR WOUND INFECTIONS



Group A *Streptococcus* (group A strep) infections are increasing in King County. Group A strep commonly causes “strep throat” and skin and wound infections, and can cause **“flesh-eating” bacterial infections and severe infections** of the blood and other organs. People living homeless and those who inject drugs are at higher risk.

Watch for symptoms of severe group A strep including:



Skin or wound that has swelling, redness or pain



Fever, dizziness or confusion, sometimes with a flat, red rash

ANYONE WITH SYMPTOMS SHOULD SEE A DOCTOR FOR TREATMENT.

HOW GROUP A STREP SPREADS PERSON-TO-PERSON



Sneezing, coughing, or spraying tiny saliva droplets when talking.

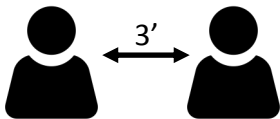


Sharing food, drinks, drugs, or personal items like forks or cups.



Contact with infected wounds or skin sores.

Anyone diagnosed with a group A strep infection should do the following until 24 hours after starting antibiotics:



Avoid close contact with others. Keep 3 feet away as much as possible.



Try to keep ill residents separate from others.



Keep wounds clean and bandaged.



Cover coughs and sneezes.

PEOPLE AT INCREASED RISK FOR SEVERE INFECTION



- Injection drug users and heavy alcohol users
- People with chronic illnesses such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, HIV infection, and people taking steroid medications
- People with chronic skin problems or breaks in the skin (wounds, sores, cuts, bites)
- People 65 years of age and older
- People living homeless

HOW HOMELESS SERVICE PROVIDERS CAN PREVENT GROUP A STREP

ENCOURAGE CLIENTS TO:



Get prompt treatment for skin infections, wounds, illnesses with fever, lice, bed bugs or itchy skin.

Regularly check, clean, and bandage wounds until healed. Infected wounds (e.g., red, swollen, painful) should be checked by a health care provider **as soon as possible**.



Wash hands frequently with soap and water (e.g., after toileting, before meals, after coughing/sneezing). Soap and water is best, but if unavailable, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.



Bathe and wash clothing as regularly as possible.

Cover coughs and sneezes.

CLIENTS SHOULD AVOID SHARING:



Personal care items (bar soap, toothbrushes, razors, combs, unwashed clothing, towels, etc.)



Food, drinks, dishes, or utensils



Cigarettes or items used to inject, smoke, or snort drugs (needles, cookers, water, tourniquets, pipes, etc.)

WHAT TO DO AT A SHELTER OR ENCAMPMENT



Make sure hand washing sinks and/or alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers (70-90% alcohol) are in convenient locations for residents and staff.



Clean and disinfect facilities routinely and consistently, especially bathrooms and shared equipment (e.g., shower chairs).



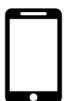
Ensure that each client stores their personal care items (e.g., razors, soap, combs) separately.



Maintain pest control measures to prevent bites and skin wounds.



Provide information on how to get harm reduction supplies (e.g. clean needles, mouthpieces for crack pipes, etc.) to reduce the risk of infection when using illicit drugs.



Notify Public Health if you have a client with a severe infection requiring hospitalization or multiple clients with group A strep: 206-296-4774.