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- **ALERT: Increased Invasive Group A Streptococcal Disease (iGAS) in Ontario**

FROM:

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Key Messages:

- There is an increase in iGAS cases in Ontario.
- Report cases of iGAS to Peel Public Health.

ALERT: Increased Invasive Group A Streptococcal Disease (iGAS) in Ontario

On May 23, 2023, the Ontario Ministry of Health released a memorandum alerting healthcare providers to trends in increased cases of iGAS in Ontario. Reported iGAS cases have increased in all age groups, with rates of illness highest in children 0 to 4 years of age and adults 65 years of age and older. Peel has also seen a trend in increased iGAS cases in comparison to previous years.

Although iGAS remains relatively uncommon, it can progress quickly and be associated with severe illness like sepsis, soft-tissue necrosis, meningitis, pneumonia or other life-threatening conditions resulting in death.

Clinicians are encouraged to:

- Be alert for and provide prompt assessment and treatment to patients with symptoms of **non-invasive GAS** (e.g., pharyngitis with consistent findings, skin, and soft tissue infections).
- GAS infections are generally considered non-infectious after 24 hours of appropriate antibiotic treatment.
- Be alert for the signs and symptoms of iGAS in your patients presenting with illness compatible with non-invasive GAS infections.
- Consider iGAS as a possible cause of severe illness, particularly in those who may be **at increased risk** including:

- Infants and young children
- People who are pregnant or postpartum
- Older adults
- Immunocompromised individuals
- People experiencing homelessness and/or using injection drugs
- Individuals with recent viral infection (e.g., chickenpox)

Testing

If iGAS is suspected, obtain appropriate specimens for routine bacterial culture or DNA detection by nucleic acid amplification testing (NAAT).

Clinical Management

Clinical management of severe iGAS disease involves supportive treatment (e.g., fluids), antimicrobials and measures to minimize or neutralize the effects of toxin production when indicated (e.g., IVIG).

Early diagnosis and aggressive management are critical, including in the peripartum period.

Consultation with an infectious diseases physician should be considered for the management of patients with suspected or confirmed iGAS.

Reporting

Immediately report cases of iGAS to Peel Public Health at 905-799-7700.

Additional recommendations:

- Practice proper hand hygiene before and after patient contact and after being exposed to bodily fluids.
- Ensure droplet contact precautions are in place for hospitalized cases of iGAS.

- Support your patients in keeping up-to-date on routine immunizations, in particular varicella immunization when indicated, and offer influenza vaccination for eligible patients.
- Educate patients or parents/guardians on the signs and symptoms of serious bacterial infections, and when to seek urgent medical attention.

Resources

- Public Health Ontario. Enhanced Epidemiologic Summary, Invasive Group A Streptococcal (iGAS) Disease in Ontario: October 1, 2022 to April 30, 2023. https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/Documents/I/2022/igas-enhanced-epi-children-0-to-17-years-of-age.pdf?rev=9279e7bf606f4b82986726d9a40e7e81&sc_lang=en.
- Public Health Ontario, Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee. Routine Practices and Additional Precautions in All Health Care Settings. https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/Documents/B/2012/bp-rpap-healthcare-settings.pdf?rev=53eff9799e164881b152e7755d2c64a7&sc_lang=en.