

Wheeling-Ohio County  
Health Department



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## **Public Health Advisory**

### **April 6, 2009**

#### **Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department Sees Increase in Streptococcal Disease**

Officials at the Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department have confirmed that seven (7) cases of invasive Group A Streptococcus have occurred in Ohio County since December 2008. In this same time frame health officials have also seen one (1) case of invasive Group B Streptococcus.

The Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department is asking area clinicians, laboratories and hospitals to report all cases of Streptococcus.

Group A streptococcus (GAS) includes a number of strains of bacteria that can produce a wide range of illnesses. GAS can cause noninvasive diseases such as strep throat, cellulitis and impetigo and are common and easily treated. GAS can also cause invasive diseases such as necrotizing fasciitis [NF], streptococcal toxic shock syndrome [STSS], bacteremia and pneumonia. These diseases require immediate medical attention. Invasive disease is a severe and sometimes life threatening infection in which the bacteria reach parts of the body where bacteria are not usually found, such as the blood, deep muscle and fat tissue, or the lungs.

STSS is a severe illness characterized by shock and multi-organ failure. Of the seven (7) cases of GAS reported in Ohio County since December 2008, five (5) of the cases have been STSS, which is above the normal rate for Ohio County. Statewide five (5) cases of STSS have been reported in West Virginia since 2009.

GAS bacteria are spread by direct contact with secretions from the nose and throat of infected individuals or by contact with infected wounds or sores on the skin. The spread of all types of GAS infections can be reduced by thorough handwashing, especially after coughing or sneezing.

The West Virginia Bureau for Public Health reports that nine (9) cases of invasive GAS have occurred since 2009, eighty-one (81) cases have been reported since 2005. In Ohio County six (6) cases of invasive GAS disease has been reported since 2005.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 9,000-11,500 cases of invasive GAS disease occur each year in the United States, resulting in 1,000-1,800 deaths annually. STSS and necrotizing fasciitis each comprise an average of about 6%-7% of these invasive cases. In contrast, there are several million cases of strep throat and impetigo each year.

At this time, there is no evidence to suggest a broader exposure or illnesses associated recent cases of GAS. However clinicians, laboratories and hospitals are asked to have a heightened index of suspicion for cases that present for care with symptoms consistent with Group A/B Streptococcus infections.

Please post or deliver this advisory to all applicable healthcare providers in your organization. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department at 304.234.3682 or visit our website at [www.ohiocountyhealth.com](http://www.ohiocountyhealth.com).