

## Communications Office

Peterborough County-City Health Unit  
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[www.pcchu.ca](http://www.pcchu.ca)



### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Health Unit Investigating Local Outbreak of Invasive Group A Streptococcus

### *Healthcare Providers Advised to Send Samples to Labs for Testing*

**Wednesday, March 17, 2010, Peterborough**

The Peterborough County-City Health Unit is currently investigating eight local cases of invasive Group A Streptococcal infections (iGAS) reported from December 26, 2009 to March 1, 2010. This is twice the number of cases expected for this period of time.

"While there is no cause for alarm, we are conducting this investigation to understand why the incidence of iGAS has increased," explained Dr. Rosana Pellizzari, Medical Officer of Health for the Health Unit. "As a first step, we have alerted all our local healthcare providers about the situation and asked them to obtain lab samples from suspected cases so we can confirm which specific type of bacterium is circulating."

Group A *Streptococcus* is a bacterium often found in the throat and on the skin. People may carry Group A streptococci in the throat or on the skin and have no symptoms of illness. Most Group A Streptococcal infections are relatively mild illnesses such as "strep throat," or impetigo. Occasionally these bacteria can cause severe and even life-threatening diseases. The most common clinical presentation for iGAS are skin or soft tissue infections, pneumonia, streptococcal toxic shock syndrome, and necrotizing fasciitis.

Invasive Group A Streptococcal is most commonly spread from person to person by:

- Droplet spread when an infected individual coughs or sneezes;
- Direct or indirect contact of non-intact skin or mucous membranes (mouth or nose) with infectious respiratory secretions or with discharges from wounds or skin lesions;
- Sharing contaminated needles.

In Ontario, iGAS is most prevalent among older adults and in young children. iGAS follows a seasonal pattern with cases occurring more frequently in the winter and early spring. The most common factors for acquiring these bacteria include injection drug use, pregnancy

NEWS RELEASE

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related risk factors, varicella (chicken pox), cancer, immunocompromised and HIV infection.

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**For further information, please contact:**

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