

# Streptococcosis

## What is Streptococcosis?

Streptococcosis is a general name for a variety of diseases caused by a group of bacteria called Streptococcus. Some “strep” organisms normally live on the body of humans or animals and do not cause disease. Others may cause disease (sometimes severe) in both people and animals.

## Where is Streptococcosis found?

The zoonotic streptococci can usually be found worldwide in their animal hosts but human infections have, in some cases, been reported only in limited geographic regions. *S. suis* is present in pigs in the U.S. but human cases have not been seen. Most *S. iniae* infections have, to date, been reported in North America. Worldwide, type 2 is the most common serotype of *S. suis* isolated from seriously ill pigs; however, other serotypes can be important in some countries. Type 9 is also common in Belgium and Holland, and types 1 and 14 are isolated frequently in the United Kingdom.

## How do animals get infected with Streptococcosis?

The animals most commonly affected with streptococcosis are horses, guinea pigs, swine, dogs, cats, and fish. Less frequently disease can occur in monkeys, cattle, sheep, goats, ferrets, and poultry. Streptococcus bacteria are common on the bodies of animals along with numerous other types of bacteria, as part of the normal flora. When the bacteria enter cuts, abrasions, other wounds or when the immune system becomes weakened, disease may occur. The bacteria can be spread between animals by direct contact, aerosol, fomites and sometimes ingestion (oral).

## How do people get infected with Streptococcosis?

The majority of infections occur from exposure to other people infected with Streptococcus bacteria or from “strep” organisms entering through wounds (direct contact), aerosol, or sometimes by ingestion (oral). Getting “strep” infections from animals are very rare. “Strep throat” is common in children.

## What are the signs and symptoms of Streptococcosis?

Symptoms include sore throat, painful swallowing, headache, high fever, nausea, vomiting, and runny nose. If a rash is present, the disease is called scarlet fever. Streptococcosis can also cause infections throughout the body (e.g., skin, heart, joints, lungs). Less commonly it can lead to severe and even fatal disease such as toxic shock syndrome.

## How do you prevent transmission of Streptococcosis?

Practice good hand washing, especially after coughing and sneezing and before preparing foods or eating. Clean any wounds thoroughly with soap and water. If signs of wound infection (e.g., redness, swelling, drainage, pain, fever) occur, seek medical care. Avoid people or animals known to have “strep”. When working with animals, wear gloves and wash hands thoroughly afterwards.