

Zoonoses Fact Sheet: Skin Sores & *Strep*

<p>What are skin sores?</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skin sores are small infected areas of skin. • They can start out from skin being scratched. This breaks the surface and lets germs like <i>Strep</i> and <i>Staph</i> bacteria into the body. • Anything that makes skin itchy is a risk factor for skin sores: scabies, hookworms, mosquitoes, ticks etc. 	<p>What are bacteria?</p> <p>Bacteria are a kind of germ, tiny living things, too small to see with the naked eye. You can only see them with a microscope. Bacteria live in many places, including the soil, skin and gut. There are a lot of types of bacteria that live around us, but only a few can cause disease, such as diarrhoea, skin sores, kidney infections and blood diseases.</p>
<p>Where are Streptococci?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Streptococci (Streps)</i> are bacteria that live on the skin, including healthy skin. They can also live inside mouths. • Normally they live on the skin of either people or animals, but some types can be shared. • Streps belong to different families or groups. Group A Streps causes most of the problems in people. 	
<p>How do <i>Strep</i> make people sick?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streps can make people sick when they get inside the body. • They can cause skin infections and sore throats (tonsillitis, strep throat) in people. When Streps from a skin sore get inside the body, they can make people really sick with rheumatic fever, post-rheumatic heart disease or a kidney disease known as post streptococcal glomerulonephritis • These are major problems in remote communities.
<p>How are dogs in community linked to <i>Strep</i>?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dogs carry diseases like mites, worms, fleas and lice that can make people itchy, causing skin sores. • Studies in the NT and Qld have found 10-35% of dogs in remote communities carried <i>Streps</i>. So far, most of these haven't been Group A Streps. • However, dog Streps may carry factors that make Group A Streps more harmful to people. Streps on dogs' tongue or coat could infect people's skin sores and mix with human Group A Streps. If they shared factors, that could make the human Streps more dangerous. 	
<p>How do we prevent people from getting sick from <i>Strep</i>?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look after skin and keep it healthy and clean: bathe or swim every day. • Treat cuts and sores quickly with antiseptic and a bandaid • Wash hands • Keeping bedding and yards clean. • Don't let dogs lick people • Keeping dogs clean from ticks and lice • Treat mange in people and dogs (anything that makes people itch and scratch damages the skin, letting in Streps). 	

Sources: Dr Sam Phelan, *Dog Health Programs in Indigenous communities, an Environmental Health Practitioner's Guide*, AMRRIC, 2010

Professor Richard Speare, *Human Doctor and Veterinarian*, James Cook University, *Zoonoses training at QLD Health/AMRRIC Workshops*, Yarrabah, 2008

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