# Japan Faces Surge in Streptococcal Toxic Shock Syndrome Cases, Experts Investigate Causes



As of June 2024, Japan is experiencing a significant surge in cases of Streptococcal Toxic Shock Syndrome (STSS), a rare and deadly bacterial infection. The Japanese National Institute of Infectious Diseases reported 1,019 STSS cases this year, significantly surpassing the number recorded in 2023. The infection, caused by toxins from Group A Streptococcus, kills up to 30 percent of patients even with medical intervention and is associated with symptoms such as fever, chills, muscle aches, nausea, and vomiting. Further symptoms include pain and swelling in the arms and legs, low blood pressure, rapid breathing, increased heart rate, and potential organ failure within 24 to 48 hours of infection onset.

STSS can be transmitted through respiratory droplets or contact with wounds and poses a higher risk to individuals aged 65 and older, those with pre-existing conditions like diabetes, and people with compromised immune systems. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has highlighted the life-threatening nature of the infection if not promptly treated.

Internationally, STSS cases have also been rising in the UK, Ireland, France, the Netherlands, and Sweden since late 2022. Notably, a wave of Strep A infections in the UK led to over 400 deaths from Scarlet Fever in late 2022. Factors such as "immunity debt" from the COVID-19 pandemic, as suggested by Professor Ken Kikuchi of Tokyo Woman’s Medical University, may be contributing to the increased vulnerability to such bacterial infections.

The current spike in Japan is the highest since records began in 1999, with experts continuing to investigate the underlying causes of this escalation in cases.