

Enquiries to Simon Bryant My reference
Direct line Your reference
Date 3 May 2022 E-mail Hcc.HealthProtection@hants.gov.uk

Dear Colleague

Re: Increase in scarlet fever notifications and co-circulation of chickenpox

We are writing to inform you of a recent increase in the number of scarlet fever and chickenpox outbreaks linked to nurseries and primary schools, including some where both infections are co-circulating.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the signs and symptoms of scarlet fever and the actions to be taken if you become aware of an outbreak at your setting or if you have scarlet fever co-circulating with chickenpox.

Signs and symptoms of scarlet fever

Scarlet fever is a common childhood infection caused by *Streptococcus pyogenes*, or group A streptococcus (GAS). The early symptoms of scarlet fever include sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting. After 12 to 48 hours the characteristic red, pinhead rash develops, typically first appearing on the chest and stomach, then rapidly spreading to other parts of the body, and giving the skin a sandpaper-like texture. The scarlet rash may be harder to spot on darker skin, although the 'sandpaper' feel should be present. Patients typically have flushed cheeks and pallor around the mouth. This may be accompanied by a 'strawberry tongue'. As the child improves peeling of the skin can occur.

Prompt treatment of scarlet fever with antibiotics is recommended to limit other people getting infected and to reduce the risk of possible complications.

Infection control advice

In schools and nurseries, it is recognised that infections can be spread through direct

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physical contact between children and staff and through shared contact with surfaces such as table tops, taps, toys and handles. During periods of high incidence of scarlet fever there may also be an increase in outbreaks in schools, nurseries and other child care settings.

As per national [Guidance on Infection Control in Schools and other Child Care Settings](#) (Chapter 3) children and adults with suspected scarlet fever should be **excluded** from nursery / school / work for **24 hours** after the commencement of appropriate antibiotic treatment. Good hygiene practice such as hand washing remains the most important step in preventing and controlling spread of infection.

Recommended actions if you suspect an outbreak of scarlet fever at your school or nursery or if there is scarlet fever and chickenpox co-circulating in your setting:

- **Contact** your UKHSA Health Protection Team on Tel. 0344 225 3861 or Email SE.AcuteResponse@phe.gov.uk for advice
- Your Health Protection Team will provide you with a **letter** and **Frequently Asked Questions** to cascade to staff and parents if appropriate.

Although scarlet fever is usually a mild illness, affected children can develop complications, especially when they or others they meet have chickenpox.

If you have any concerns, please contact your local UKHSA Health Protection Team for advice.

Yours sincerely



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