

2022 December Group A strep (Scarlet Fever and I GAS)

- Information for schools & Early years settings.

The UKSHA reports on increased Scarlet Fever for the time of year and the news reports of a small number of very sad deaths due to the much more rare Invasive Group A streptococcus infection are of course causing anxiety and concern for parents schools and health care professionals.

Here is a summary of the current useful advice and information. We are anticipating some nationally created information /advice to become available in the next 12- 48 hours.

GPs and hospitals have been alerted so they will be vigilant for the signs / symptoms and will prescribe antibiotics if they think necessary based on the clinical assessment.

Schools and nurseries have been apparently also been alerted to be vigilant and take the right steps if there are cases of Group A Strep infections in the school/nursery.

Public health specialists from the UK Health Security Agency support schools / nurseries to manage infections and to provide information and advice to the school community when needed.

If you have a confirmed case of Scarlet Fever please report it to the UKSHA at North East North Central London Health Protection Team (UKHSA) necl.team@ukhsa.gov.uk or 020 3837 7084 (open 9am to 5pm daily).

What is Scarlet Fever and Group A Streptococcus ?

Scarlet fever is usually a mild illness, but it is highly infectious.

Look out for symptoms in your child, which include a sore throat, headache, and fever, along with a fine, pinkish or red body rash with a sandpapery feel.

On darker skin, the rash can be more difficult to detect visually but skin will have a sandpapery feel.

Scarlet fever should be treated with antibiotics, so if you see those symptoms Contact NHS 111 or your GP. Early treatment of scarlet fever with antibiotics is important to reduce the risk of complications such as pneumonia or a bloodstream infection.

If your child has scarlet fever, keep them at home until at least 24 hours (1 whole day) after the **start of antibiotic treatment** to avoid spreading the infection to others.

Scarlet fever is caused by bacteria called group A streptococci. These bacteria also cause other respiratory and skin infections such as strep throat and impetigo.

In very rare occasions, the bacteria can get into the bloodstream and cause an illness called invasive Group A strep (iGAS). While still uncommon, there has been an increase in invasive Group A strep cases this year, particularly in children under 10.

The antibiotic used to treat scarlet fever is usually Pencillin V, sometimes Amoxicillin or Azithromycin for those with penicillin allergy. NICE treatment guidance is here:

<https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/scarlet-fever/management/management/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/scarlet-fever/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ukhsa-update-on-scarlet-fever-and-invasive-group-a-strep>

How do I prevent it ?

Good hand and respiratory hygiene are important for stopping the spread of many bugs. By teaching your child how to wash their hands properly with soap for 20 seconds, using a tissue to catch coughs and sneezes, and keeping away from others when feeling unwell, they will be able to reduce the risk of picking up or spreading infections.

Here is a link with more information about preventing common infections in children
<https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2022/10/25/5-ways-to-protect-your-under-5s-this-winter/>

How do I know if my child or a child in my care has the invasive version?

As a parent, or carer if you feel that your child seems seriously unwell, you should trust your own judgement. Contact NHS 111 or your GP if:

- your child is getting worse
- your child is feeding or eating much less than normal
- your child has had a dry nappy for 12 hours or more or shows other [signs of dehydration](#)
- your baby is under 3 months and has a temperature of 38°C, or is older than 3 months and has a temperature of 39°C or higher
- your baby feels hotter than usual when you touch their back or chest, or feels sweaty
- your child is very tired or irritable

Call 999 or go to A&E if:

- your child is having difficulty breathing – you may notice grunting noises or their tummy sucking under their ribs
- there are pauses when your child breathes
- your child's [skin, tongue or lips are blue](#)
- your child is floppy and will not wake up or stay awake

Information taken from :

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ukhsa-update-on-scarlet-fever-and-invasive-group-a-strep>