

22nd September 2022

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Regionally and nationally, we continue to see high rates of scarlet fever, higher than would be expected for this time of year. Scarlet fever is a highly contagious bacterial infection, commonly seen in children between the ages of 2 and 8 years old. The bacteria which cause scarlet fever can be spread by coughing, sneezing, through normal breathing, through saliva and oral secretions, and by touching or being in direct contact with an infected person.

Symptoms

Please be vigilant of these signs and symptoms in your child:

- The first signs of scarlet fever can be flu-like symptoms, including a high temperature, a sore throat and swollen neck glands (a large lump on the side of your neck).
- A rash which appears 12 to 48 hours later. It looks like small, raised bumps and starts on the chest and tummy, then spreads. The rash makes skin feel rough, like sandpaper.

If you notice any of these symptoms, **please keep your child at home and speak to your GP to see if treatment is necessary.** Most children make a full and quick recovery and can return to school 24 hours after commencing antibiotics if they feel well enough.

In rare cases, scarlet fever can be dangerous causing ear infections, throat abscesses, sinusitis, pneumonia, meningitis and rheumatic fever. Complications from scarlet fever may also arise if other childhood illnesses, such as chickenpox, which can be circulating at the same time. This would be closely monitored by our local infection control and health protection specialists.

Over the past two years, we have all followed Covid-19 precautions, and this has helped prevent the spread of many infections, however as people begin to mix in larger groups, we may see increases in other childhood illnesses. More information can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/>

Infection prevention

We can all take some simple steps to help reduce the incidence and onward transmission of any infectious disease:

Maintain good ventilation. Opening windows and doors where possible allows fresh outdoor air inside, and indoor air to escape, helping to carry away infectious droplets that may have been coughed, sneezed or breathed out. If the temperature is extremely hot or cold, open windows for a few minutes every hour to encourage the fresh air flow.

Observe good respiratory hygiene. Carry tissues to catch coughs and sneezes or use the inside of the elbow rather than hands, which may touch surfaces that others touch.

Make sure your child is fully vaccinated. Vaccinations are the most effective way we can protect ourselves and our children against ill health, and every year they prevent up to 3 million deaths worldwide. Vaccines protect you, your child, your family, and the community from serious and potentially deadly diseases. For further information please visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/>

Wash our hands effectively, and frequently. Washing all areas of your hands well for 15 to 30 seconds with soap and water, and following the WET, SOAP, WASH, RINSE, DRY order will help to remove dirt, viruses and bacteria and helps to prevent the spread of infection.

It is particularly important to wash our hands:

- On returning home, if you have been to work, to the shops, or outside
- Before eating or drinking
- After using the toilet or changing a nappy
- After blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing
- Before or after handling raw foods, like meat and vegetables
- Before and after treating cuts or wounds
- After touching pets and animals or their food, and after cleaning their cages

Yours sincerely,



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