

December 8, 2022

Dear Parent / Carers

You will have heard that there is an increase in scarlet fever in school age children in England. We need to remember that infections remain extremely rare. We understand that this is a worrying time for parents, but please only keep children away from school if they are experiencing symptoms. Our children have missed far too much school in the last 2 years so it is important that we continue to build up that lost time.

Although scarlet fever is usually a mild illness, it should be treated with antibiotics to minimise the risk of complications and reduce the spread to others.

The **symptoms** of scarlet fever include a sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting. This is followed by a fine red rash which typically first appears on the chest and stomach, rapidly spreading to other parts of the body. On more darkly-pigmented skin, the scarlet rash may be harder to spot, but it should feel like 'sandpaper'. The face can be flushed red but pale around the mouth.

If you think you, or your child, have scarlet fever:

- See your GP or contact NHS 111 as soon as possible
- Make sure that you/your child takes the full course of any antibiotics prescribed by the doctor.
- Stay at home, away from school for **at least 48 hours after starting the antibiotic treatment** to avoid spreading the infection
- When calling in to the school absence line, please state specifically if the condition has been confirmed by a doctor.

If your child has an underlying condition which affects their immune system, you should contact your GP or hospital doctor to discuss whether any additional measures are needed.

These are links to further information:

- UKHSA update on scarlet fever and invasive Group A strep [UKHSA update on scarlet fever and invasive Group A strep](#)
- A fact sheet that covers what scarlet fever is and other frequently asked questions: [Factsheet \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- Scarlet fever guidance on symptoms, diagnosis on treatment: [Scarlet fever: symptoms, diagnosis and treatment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

## Guidance on Strep A / Scarlet Fever

You will have heard that there is an increase in scarlet fever in school age children in England. We need to remember that infections remain extremely rare. The key message is that should a pupil have suspected symptoms the school must inform parents and it is the parent's responsibility to decide what to then do. Here are some information resources that may be useful:

- As a starting point this Schools Week article is a very useful summary <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/strep-a-in-schools-what-the-guidance-says/>
- A fact sheet that covers what scarlet fever is and other frequently asked questions: [Factsheet \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/guidance/what-is-scarlet-fever)
- Scarlet fever guidance on symptoms, diagnosis on treatment: [Scarlet fever: symptoms, diagnosis and treatment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/scarlet-fever-symptoms-diagnosis-and-treatment)

This gives the initial symptoms of scarlet fever as a sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting, which is followed after 12 to 48 hours by a characteristic fine red rash develops. Typically, the rash first appears on the chest and stomach, rapidly spreading to other parts of the body. On more darkly-pigmented skin, the rash may be harder to spot, although a 'sandpaper' feel to the rash should be present. It also makes it clear that anyone with symptoms should seek a consultation with a GP. If the GP thinks it is scarlet fever the GP will prescribe appropriate antibiotics. The individual will need to be away from school for 24 hours after starting the antibiotic (or until fully recovered if not accepting antibiotics).

In more severe cases the bacteria that causes Scarlet Fever can enter the bloodstream and cause the potentially fatal iGAS infection. Symptoms of this are a high fever and severe muscle aches, perhaps with redness around a skin wound if that's the site of entry. In cases where Scarlet Fever is developing into iGAS this may well be in conjunction with the symptoms listed above.

- The UK HSA press release from December 2nd for schools <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ukhsa-update-on-scarlet-fever-and-invasive-group-a-strep>
- Comprehensive guidance on the public health management of scarlet fever outbreaks in educational settings: [Guidelines for the public health management of scarlet fever outbreaks in schools, nurseries and other childcare settings](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/public-health-management-of-scarlet-fever-outbreaks-in-schools-nurseries-and-other-childcare-settings). Particularly useful is the outbreak control advice in section 5.5 (page 9) and promotion of enhanced handwashing.

It is possible though even rarer for staff to catch scarlet fever /Strep A . They should consult their doctor. There is no particular risk for pregnant women and no requirement for an extended period of isolation.

If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely



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