



18th January 2023

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s),

Group A Streptococcal infections, including Scarlet Fever and Strep A

We write to let you know about a national increase in notifications to the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) of infections caused by Group A streptococcus. They are being diagnosed as cases of Scarlet Fever, Strep A or Group A Strep.

We would like to give you information about signs and symptoms to look out for, what to do if you think that you or your child might have one of these illnesses.

Signs and symptoms of Strep A include:

- Flu-like symptoms e.g. high temperature (fever), swollen glands, or aching body
- Sore throat (strep throat or tonsillitis)
- Rash that feels rough, like sandpaper (scarlet fever – see below)
- Scabs and sores (impetigo)
- Pain and swelling (cellulitis)
- Severe muscle aches
- Nausea and vomiting

Signs and symptoms of scarlet fever:

While case numbers are high, please look out for the symptoms so that appropriate and timely treatment can be given.

Scarlet fever is usually a mild illness that clears up quickly after a course of antibiotics. It usually starts with a sore throat, headache, fever, nausea, and vomiting, followed by a rash that feels like sandpaper to the touch.

The rash usually develops 12 to 48 hours after the other symptoms, typically on the chest and stomach first, then rapidly spreading to other parts of the body.



On white skin the rash looks pink or red. On brown and black skin it might be harder to see a change in colour, but you can still feel the sandpaper-like texture of the rash and see the raised bumps. Patients usually have flushed cheeks and can be pale around the mouth. This may be accompanied by a bright red 'strawberry' tongue.

Despite the increase in infections, the risk of more serious infection remains very low. But as a parent or carer, if you feel that your child seems seriously unwell, you should trust your own judgement.

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

- **contact your GP or NHS 111 as soon as possible, because early treatment of scarlet fever with antibiotics is important to reduce the risk of a more serious infection**
- make sure that the ill person takes the full course of any antibiotics prescribed. Although they will feel better soon after starting the course of antibiotics, they must take the full course to ensure that none of the bacteria remain in the throat after recovery
- stay at home, away from nursery, school or work until at least 24 hours after starting the antibiotic treatment, to avoid spreading the infection

You can help stop the spread of infection through frequent hand washing and by not sharing eating utensils, clothes, bedding and towels. All contaminated tissues should be disposed of immediately.

Invasive Group A Strep (iGAS)

In very rare cases, the bacteria can get into the bloodstream and cause an illness called invasive Group A Strep (iGAS). Whilst still very uncommon, there has been an increase in iGAS cases this year, particularly in children under 10 years old. It is very rare for children with scarlet fever to develop iGAS infection.

As a parent, 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 shows signs of dehydration including a dry nappy for 12 hours or more
- 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 sweaty or hotter than usual when you touch their back or chest
- 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

Stop the spread

During periods of high incidence of infections, there may be outbreaks in schools, nurseries, and other childcare settings. **Children who are unwell should not attend school, particularly if they have a fever.** Children and adults with suspected scarlet fever should stay off nursery / school / work until **24 hours** after the start of appropriate antibiotic treatment.

Good hygiene practice such as hand washing remains the most important step in preventing and controlling spread of infection.

Thank you for helping us to stop the spread of infection and keeping our community safe.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs G. Franklin
Headteacher

Further information

- Strep A information: www.nhs.uk/conditions/strep-a
- Scarlet fever information: www.nhs.uk/conditions/scarlet-fever
- Further reading on Scarlet fever:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/scarlet-fever-symptoms-diagnosis-treatment/scarlet-fever-factsheet

