



7<sup>th</sup> December 2022

## **Re: Scarlet Fever and Group A Streptococcal Infections**

Dear Parents/Carers

You may have seen in the news over the past few days, reports on the rising number of Group A Streptococcal infections (GAS), including scarlet fever.

Scarlet fever is caused by a 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 (GAS). While still uncommon, there has been an increase in invasive Group A strep cases this year, particularly in children under 10.

It is important to note that the vast majority of these cases either clear by themselves or after a course of antibiotics.

However, given the current high number of cases, we thought it would be useful to provide you with some information on what to look out for, how to prevent infection and what to do if your child has symptoms. This information is based on current guidance provided to us by local authorities.

Symptoms of GAS including scarlet fever include:

- Sore throat
- Headache
- Fever
- Nausea and vomiting

After 12 to 48 hours, the characteristic red, pinhead rash develops (scarlet fever), 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 appear pale around the mouth. This may be accompanied by a bright red 'strawberry' tongue.

**If your child develops any of the above symptoms, please keep them at home and speak to your GP or contact NHS 111 as soon as possible.**

If your child is suspected of having GAS or scarlet fever, it is likely they will be prescribed antibiotics and should stay at home, for at least 24 hours after starting the antibiotic treatment to avoid the spread of infection. Please make sure that your child takes the full course of any antibiotics prescribed. Although your child may feel better soon after starting

the course of antibiotics, you must ensure they complete the full course to ensure that the bacteria is not carried in their throat after recovery.

If your child develops symptoms while they are in school, a member of staff will contact you immediately to ask you to come and collect them.

GAS and scarlet fever are both highly infectious, however there are simple measures which can be taken to prevent infection. At home 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.

We will also be taking the following precautions in our schools:

- Good hand hygiene, including regular handwashing with soap and water.
- Hand sanitiser.
- Good respiratory hygiene.
- Continue to regularly clean surfaces that people touch frequently.

In most cases the infection should clear but if you are concerned about the condition of your child (especially in young children) you should seek urgent medical attention (call 999 or go to A&E) especially if:

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

It is believed the current problem is being exacerbated by the large number of viral infections currently circulating, including flu, Covid and others. Therefore, we would encourage those of you who have not yet had/consented to have the flu vaccine to do so, including the COVID-19 vaccine if you are eligible.

Further information is available at:

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

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

We will continue to work with local health protection teams and follow any official guidance as it emerges and will of course keep you updated with any further developments on this matter.

Yours faithfully,



Amarjit Cheema OBE  
Chief Executive Officer