

12th December 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

Scarlet Fever and Group Strep A Infections

UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is reporting an increased number of cases of Group A streptococcus (Strep A) compared to normal at this time of year. There is no evidence that a new strain is circulating, and the increase is most likely related to high amounts of circulating bacteria and social mixing.

What are Scarlet Fever and Strep A?

Scarlet fever is caused by bacteria called Group A streptococci (Strep A). The bacteria usually cause a mild infection that can be easily treated with antibiotics.

In very rare occasions, the bacteria can get into the bloodstream and cause an illness called invasive Group A strep (iGAS).

What are the symptoms of Strep A/Scarlet Fever?

Strep A infections can cause a range of symptoms that you should be aware of, including:

- Sore throat
- Headache
- Fever
- A fine, pinkish or red body rash with a sandpapery feel
- On darker skin the rash can be more difficult to detect visually but will have a sandpapery feel

If your child becomes unwell with these symptoms, it is recommended that you to contact your GP practice or contact NHS 111 (which operates a 24/7 service) to seek advice.

If your child has scarlet fever, the advice is they stay at home until at least 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment to avoid spreading the infection to others.

You know your child better than anyone and you will recognise if they are unwell. It is important to trust your own judgement and if your child seems seriously unwell 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.

Managing confirmed cases

We are closely monitoring children's illnesses and any confirmed cases of Scarlet Fever. We have a responsibility to contact the UKHSA health protection team if there is an outbreak in the Centre.

How to help prevent Strep A?

To prevent the spread of Strep A, UKHSA advises children, young people and staff implement good hand and respiratory hygiene practices.

For more information visit the UKHSA [website](#) or the [Education Hub](#).