

Scarlet Fever

You may have heard on the news that the UK is seeing higher rates of scarlet fever than would be expected for this time of year. Scarlet fever is usually a mild illness, but it is highly infectious.

Scarlet fever is caused by bacteria called group A streptococci. In very rare occasions, the bacteria can cause an illness called invasive Group A strep (iGAS), which can lead to more serious illness. Whilst still very uncommon, there has been an increase in invasive Group A strep cases this year, particularly in children under 10.

Please be aware of the symptoms to look out for in your child:

Symptoms of scarlet fever

- sore throat
- headache
- fever
- 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 (please see example images)



Who to contact?

Contact NHS 111 or your GP if you suspect your child has scarlet fever, early treatment of scarlet fever with antibiotics is important to reduce the risk of complications, such as pneumonia or a bloodstream infection such as iGAS.

If your child has scarlet fever, **keep them at home until at least 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment** to avoid spreading the infection to others.

If you feel that your child seems seriously unwell, contact NHS 111 or your GP if:

- your child is getting worse
- your child is feeding or eating much less than normal
- your child has had a dry nappy for 12 hours or more or shows other [signs of dehydration](#)
- your baby is under 3 months and has a temperature of 38C, or is older than 3 months and has a temperature of 39C or higher
- your baby feels hotter than usual when you touch their back or chest, or feels sweaty
- 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*

Infection prevention

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

Maintain good ventilation: *allowing fresh outdoor air inside where possible, helping to carry away infectious droplets that may have been coughed, sneezed or breathed out. If the temperature is extremely 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 three million deaths worldwide. Vaccines protect you, your child, your family, and the community from serious and potentially deadly diseases. More information nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/*

Wash our hands effectively, and frequently: *washing all areas of your hands well for 20 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.*

Over the past two years, we have followed Covid-19 precautions, 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 nhs.uk/conditions/scarlet-fever/