

Wednesday 07 December 2022

Health Update and Guidance

Dear Parents/Carers,

We have been informed this week of some suspected cases of Scarlet Fever and Strep A – nothing has been confirmed as yet. We are however, following all the Government advice

The school is actively following Government infection control advice to minimise spread, please see below. This advice is not only for the school but for the whole community so please make sure to read the guidance carefully:

- Children and adults with streptococcal throat infection (as confirmed by a clinician) or scarlet fever **should not return to school or nursery until at least 24 hours after starting treatment** with an appropriate antibiotic (after 48 hours if treated for impetigo)
- Hand hygiene – use liquid soap and water followed by good drying,
- Increase frequency and enhanced cleaning of key areas, especially bathrooms and all-touch surfaces.
- Respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette (Catch It Bin It, Kill It.)
- Children and staff should be reminded that all scrapes or wounds, especially bites, should be thoroughly cleaned and covered
- Sore throat: parents should follow NHS advice about when to contact their GP or NHS 111 if they are concerned; NHS advice is that children with sore throat **and fever** should not attend school until well

We ask that families be mindful if their child is unwell, but encourage pupils who are not displaying the signs and symptoms of Strep A to still attend school as per usual. If you have any concerns, please do make sure to speak to your GP and notify the school as soon as possible.

Further Government advice can be found for Scarlet Fever and Strep A on the following pages.

What is Strep A?

- A type of **bacteria** sometimes found in the throat or on the skin
- **Very rare** but can cause **severe/life-threatening** illness and be **contagious**
- Treatable with **antibiotics**

What are the symptoms?



Most healthy people remain **symptom free**



Scarlet fever (high temperature, sore throat, swollen neck glands, rash)



Sunburn-type rash that can feel like sandpaper

Throat infection



Skin infections



Seek medical help if you think you are showing symptoms

Source: NHS

Scarlet fever

Scarlet fever is a contagious bacterial infection that mostly affects young children. It is easily treated with antibiotics. The first signs of scarlet fever can be flu-like symptoms, including high temperature, a sore throat and swollen neck glands (a large lump on the side of your neck).

A rash appears 12 to 48 hours later. It looks like small, raised bumps and starts on the chest and tummy, then spreads. The rash makes your skin feel rough, like sandpaper. On white skin the rash looks pink or red. It may be harder to see on brown and black skin, but you can still feel it. A white coating also appears on the tongue. This peels, leaving the tongue red, swollen and covered in little bumps (called “strawberry tongue”). The rash does not appear on the face, but the cheeks can look red. The redness may be harder to see on brown and black skin.

Contact a GP if your child:

- Has scarlet fever symptoms
- Does not get better in a week (after seeing a GP)
- Has scarlet fever and chickenpox at the same time
- Is ill again, weeks after scarlet fever got better – this can be a sign of a complication, such as rheumatic fever
- Is feeling unwell and has been in contact with someone who has scarlet fever

Scarlet fever is very easily spread. Check with a GP before you go in. They may suggest a phone consultation.

What to do if you feel your child seems seriously unwell

As a parent, if you feel that your child seems seriously unwell, you should trust your own judgement. Contact NHS 111 or your GP if your child is getting worse.

Children with scarlet fever should stay at home until at least 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment to avoid spreading the infection to others. They can return to school/nursery after 24h of antibiotic use if they do not have a fever anymore. If no antibiotics have been administered, the individual will be infectious for 2 to 3 weeks and should be excluded for this period.

Invasive group A Strep infection

In very rare occasions, the bacteria can get into the bloodstream and cause an illness called invasive Group A strep (iGAS). The initial signs of iGAS are the same as for other severe infectious diseases. As a parent, if you feel that a child seems seriously unwell, you should trust your own judgement. Here is some general advice for parents:

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 38°C, or is older than 3 months and has a temperature of 39°C or higher
- 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 and control

During periods of high incidence of scarlet fever there may also be an increase in outbreaks in schools, nurseries and other childcare settings. Good hand and respiratory hygiene (washing hands for 20 seconds, using a tissue to catch coughs and sneezes) remain the most important steps in preventing and controlling spread of infection. No routine contact tracing or further isolation are usually required.

For additional information on scarlet fever symptoms and treatment see this:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scarlet-fever-symptoms-diagnosis-treatment/scarlet-fever-factsheet>



Following the recent news we are aware of some concern regarding the reports of a strain of Strep A. If your child is displaying any of the symptoms described please seek immediate medical advice from 111 or your GP and keep your child at home to reduce the risk of spreading the infection.

To help protect your little ones we advise regular hand washing with soap and warm water, encouraging covering of mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, keeping children at home if they feel unwell.