



7<sup>th</sup> December

Dear Parents / Carers

You may have heard that there is an increase in the numbers of Strep A (Streptococcus A) cases in England.

### **What is Strep A?**

Strep A is a bacteria that causes common childhood infections including tonsillitis, pharyngitis, scarlet fever, impetigo and cellulitis. Lots of us carry strep A naturally on our skin, but sometimes leads to these infections, which can be treated with antibiotics.

The most serious infections happen when the bacteria get into parts of the body where it is not normally found, such as the lungs or blood; this is called invasive Group A Strep or iGAS. In very rare cases iGAS infections can result in death.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) are investigating the large numbers of scarlet fever infections, which are caused by Strep A. They will issue further guidance shortly.

### **What are the symptoms of scarlet fever?**

The first symptoms of scarlet fever often include a sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting. After 12 to 48 hours the characteristic fine red rash develops (if you touch it, it feels like sandpaper). Typically, it first appears on the chest and stomach, rapidly spreading to other parts of the body. On more darkly-pigmented skin, the rash may be harder to spot, although the 'sandpaper' feel should be present.

Further symptoms include:

- fever over 38.3° C (101° F) or higher is common
- white coating on the tongue which peels a few days later, leaving the tongue looking red and swollen (known as 'strawberry tongue')
- swollen glands in the neck
- feeling tired and unwell
- flushed red face, but pale around the mouth. The flushed face may appear more 'sunburnt' on darker skin



- peeling skin on the fingertips, toes and groin area, as the rash fades

It usually takes 2 to 5 days from infection before the first symptoms appear. However, the incubation period may be as short as 1 day and as long as 7 days.

Scarlet fever usually clears up after a week, but it is advisable to visit your GP to get a full diagnosis and proper treatment.

### **How can I prevent scarlet fever?**

Scarlet fever is spread via the mucus and saliva of infected people. It can also be caught from any drinking glasses, plates or utensils they have used.

To protect yourself from getting the illness you should:

- wash your hands often
- not share eating utensils with an infected person
- wash, or dispose of, handkerchiefs and tissues contaminated by an infected person
- be aware that you can catch scarlet fever by inhaling contaminated airborne droplets, if someone with the illness coughs or sneezes in the air near you.

### **What do I do?**

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

- see your GP or contact NHS 111 as soon as possible
- make sure that you or your child take(s) the full course of any antibiotics prescribed. Although you or your child will feel better soon after starting the course of antibiotics, you must complete the course to ensure that you do not carry the bacteria in your throat after you have recovered
- stay at home, away from nursery, school or work for 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 or handkerchiefs should be washed, or disposed of immediately.

The following guidance may be helpful to you as parents understand what is happening and what you can do.

- UKHSA published this blog to explain the increase in cases, the signs and symptoms **Group A Strep - What you need to know - UK Health Security Agency (blog.gov.uk)**
- This **Factsheet (publishing.service.gov.uk)** explains what scarlet fever is
- This guidance explains the symptoms and treatment: **Scarlet fever: symptoms, diagnosis and treatment - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**

## **What are we doing in school?**

The school has been issued with guidance on how to prevent outbreaks and guidance on how to manage these if they happen. We would ask everyone in school to please remember the basic good hygiene messages of handwashing and coughing and sneezing into a tissue to stop the spread of germs.

When we get more information from UKHSA, we will share it with you as soon as possible. Through our joint efforts, we can help stop the spread of illness in our school.

Yours sincerely

*W Thompson*

**Mr W Thompson**  
Principal