

Scarlet Fever and Group A Strep

What you need to know

In colder weather lots of people get sore throats, colds and coughs, and most of these should get better without medical help.

However, there are also some bacterial infections circulating which benefit from treatment with antibiotics. One of these infections is called scarlet fever and there is a higher than normal rate of this going around now.

Scarlet fever is caused by a bacteria called Group A Strep which can cause breathing problems and skin infections.

It's usually a mild illness, but it can be easily passed between people, so making sure everyone washes their hands carefully and regularly is important to stop the spread.

It is important to look out for signs in your child including:

- a sore throat
- headache
- fever, along with a fine, pinkish or red body rash with a 'sandpaper' feel.



Contact NHS 111 or a GP if you think your child has scarlet fever, because early treatment with antibiotics will reduce the risk of health complications.

If your child has scarlet fever, keep them at home until at least 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatments to avoid spreading the infection to others. If you feel that your child seems seriously unwell, you should trust your own judgement.

Contact NHS 111 or a 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 (www.nhs.uk and search 'dehydration')
- your baby is under three months and has a temperature of 38°C, or is older than three months and has a temperature of 39°C 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 has 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 (visit www.nhs.uk and search 'blue skin or lips')
- your child is floppy and will not wake up or stay awake.

More information on scarlet fever and Group A Strep is available on the government website:

Visit www.gov.uk and search 'Strep A'