Scarlet Fever and Strep A Information for Schools

**December 2022**

We are writing to you to inform you of a recent national and local increase in confirmed scarlet fever infection as well as invasive strep A infections.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the signs and symptoms and the actions to be taken if you become aware of an outbreak at your school or nursery.

Signs and symptoms of scarlet fever

Scarlet fever is caused by strep A and in rare cases, strep A can also cause a more serious illness called invasive group A strep infection. Strep A (Group A streptococcus) is a common bacteria which many carry in their throat or on their skin without resulting in illness.

The first signs of scarlet fever often include a sore throat, headache, fever, swollen neck glands, nausea and vomiting. After 12 to 48 hours the characteristic red, pinhead rash develops typically first appearing on the chest and stomach, rapidly spreading to other parts of the body and giving the skin a sandpaper like texture. Further symptoms include flushed cheeks but pale around the mouth, white coating on the tongue which later develops into what is known as ‘strawberry tongue’, feeling tired and unwell and later peeling skin on the fingertips, toes and groin area, as the rash fades.

Scarlet fever, is highly contagious and is spread by close contact with someone carrying the bacteria or by shared contact with surfaces such as table tops, taps, toys and handles. It takes around 2 to 5 days to develop symptoms after exposure and usually clears up after a week and antibiotic treatment.

Preventing transmission in schools

Good infection control is particularly important during periods with high levels of circulating infection.

**Exclude unwell pupils and staff -** Those affected by scarlet fever should be excluded from school until 24 hours after their first dose of antibiotics.

**Encourage good hand hygiene -** Handwashing is a highly effective way of preventing transmission. Pupils and staff should frequently wash their hands with warm water and soap (for at least 20 seconds), particularly after using the toilet, after using a tissue to catch a cough or sneeze, and before eating.

**Cleaning the environment -** increasing general clearing of the school environment can help to reduce spread of winter illnesses e.g. twice-daily cleaning of communal areas where surfaces such as handrails, door handles, toilet flushes and taps can easily become contaminated.

Managing scarlet fever in schools

Please contact local public health and health and safety teams at SBC if you are concerned

**Public Health** Public.HealthTeam@stockton.gov.uk

**Health & Safety** healthandsafetyunit@stockton.gov.uk

Contact the regional health protection team at UKHSA if you wish further information or suspect an outbreak (2 or more cases).

**UKHAS Health Protection** ICC.NorthEast@ukhsa.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 303 8596 option 1

Useful links and guidance

Group A Strep - What you need to know (UKHSA): [Group A Strep - What you need to know - UK Health Security Agency (blog.gov.uk)](https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2022/12/05/group-a-strep-what-you-need-to-know/)

Update on scarlet fever and invasive Group A strep: UKHSA update on scarlet fever and invasive Group A strep - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

NHS, Scarlet Fever: [Scarlet fever - NHS (www.nhs.uk)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/scarlet-fever/)

[Scarlet fever: symptoms, diagnosis and treatment - GOV.UK](https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=394c2a3d3972d03cJmltdHM9MTY3MDE5ODQwMCZpZ3VpZD0xNmJmNmIzYy1jNzIyLTY4MTktMzVkMS02NTgwYzY2MjY5OWEmaW5zaWQ9NTIwMw&ptn=3&hsh=3&fclid=16bf6b3c-c722-6819-35d1-6580c662699a&psq=Scarlet+fever%3a+symptoms%2c+diagnosis+and+treatment&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ292LnVrL2dvdmVybm1lbnQvcHVibGljYXRpb25zL3NjYXJsZXQtZmV2ZXItc3ltcHRvbXMtZGlhZ25vc2lzLXRyZWF0bWVudC9zY2FybGV0LWZldmVyLWZhY3RzaGVldA&ntb=1)

Health protection in children and young people settings