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“Valuing every achievement”

Dear Parent / Carers,

Re: Increase in scarlet fever

Many of you will have heard on the news about the increase number of children with Strep A and Scarlet Fever. If you feel your child is unwell, please keep them at home and monitor them. Please keep us informed and let us know the symptoms and any advice issued by doctors etc. You know your child better than anyone and you must be persistent in getting your voice heard about your child's health.

Below is some information/ guidance you may find useful about Strep A and Scarlet Fever. We would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the signs, symptoms and the actions to be taken if you think that you or your child might have scarlet fever. If you need any support with this, please contact the school.

Signs and symptoms of scarlet fever

Scarlet fever is a common childhood infection. It is not usually serious, but should be treated with antibiotics to reduce the risk of complications (such as pneumonia) and spread to others. The early symptoms of scarlet fever include sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting. After 12 to 48 hours, the characteristic red, pinhead rash develops, typically first appearing on the chest and stomach, then rapidly spreading to other parts of the body, and giving the skin a sandpaper-like texture. The scarlet rash may be harder to spot on darker skin, although the 'sandpaper' feel should be present. Patients typically have flushed cheeks and be pale around the mouth. This may be accompanied by a bright red 'strawberry' tongue.

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

- contact your GP or 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 should be disposed of immediately.

Is Strep A dangerous?

Very rarely, strep A can also cause something called invasive group A streptococcal infection or iGAS. This can be deadly. Whilst still very uncommon, there has been an increase in iGAS cases this year, particularly in children under 10 years old. It is very rare for children with scarlet fever to develop iGAS infection. Invasive disease happens when the bacteria get past your body's immune defences. This can happen when you are already ill or are on treatments, such as some cancer therapies, that affect your immune system.

The UK Health Security Agency advises: "Anyone with high fever, severe muscle aches, pain in one area of the body and unexplained vomiting or diarrhoea should call NHS 111 and seek medical help immediately."

As a parent, you should trust your own judgement.

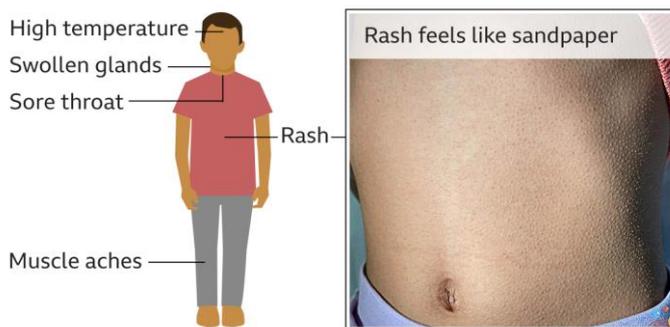
Contact NHS 111 or your GP if:

- 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

Strep A: What to look for



Source: Don't Forget the Bubbles Skin Deep, BBC research

Stop the spread

During periods of high incidence of scarlet fever, there may also be an increase in outbreaks in schools, nurseries and other childcare settings. Children and adults with suspected scarlet fever should stay off nursery / school / work until **24 hours after** the start of appropriate antibiotic treatment. Good hygiene practice such as hand washing remains the most important step in preventing and controlling spread of infection.

