

Strep A and Scarlet Fever Facts

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Group A streptococcal infection

You may have seen in the news that nationally there have been deaths in children from invasive Group A Streptococcal infection since September.

Scarlet fever is caused by Group A streptococcus but lots of us have it already.

Up to 20% of healthy children are already colonised by strep A in throat or skin.

This means they would get a positive+ swab results anyway.
But when you get Strep A infection it causes rash and fever.

Scarlet fever starts with general symptoms

- Fever
- Nausea
- Headache
- Sore throat
- General Fatigue

The symptoms of Scarlet fever usually resolve after a week. Most children will get back to normal in around a week.

After that, they can get peeling of the fingers and toes.

You can also get White coat on the tongue which peels = strawberry tongue, Flushed face, Lymph nodes (glands) in the neck



Source: Shah BK, Satchan R, Anand S, Silverberg H. Atlas of Pediatric Emergency Medicine. www.pediatricemergencymedicine.com
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The rash in Scarlet fever is classically like sandpaper.

Then 48 hours later a rash appears on the tummy that spreads to the neck, arms, & legs.

The rash is:

- Rough like sandpaper
- Often worse in skin folds (groin, armpits)





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Know when to call 111 or see your GP.

- **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
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Know when to call 999 or go to the Emergency Department

- 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

Treatment

- If your child has Scarlet fever you may get a throat swab & antibiotics.
- The fever usually settles after 24h of antibiotics but the course should be completed.
- One reason antibiotics are given is to prevent complications.
- Complications from Group A Strep are extremely rare.
- The complication that is in the news is Invasive Group A Strep (IGAS).
- Antibiotics are also given to prevent transmission.
- Not every child needs antibiotics.

Transmission

is through mucous, saliva, or coughing.

Children can pass on Group A Strep to vulnerable adults so sometimes antibiotics are recommended as a Public Health measure.

Know the exclusion period.

Children should be excluded from school until they've had 24 hours of antibiotics.

Without antibiotics, they should be excluded for 2 weeks.

There are many viruses going around that also give children a sore throat & runny nose.

It is the job of medical professionals to assess your child & make a decision.

Remember that:

- Fever is a normal bodily response to fight infection
- Fever on its own doesn't cause harm
- Most children with a fever do not have Strep A
- Most children with Scarlet fever recover quickly

- **Further information** is available at NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions/sore-throat/ or [Scarlet fever - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk).
- [UKHSA update on scarlet fever and invasive Group A strep - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- The UK Health Security Agency (UKSA) have produced a helpful video that you can view [HERE](#).
- Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust have created a useful guide for parents and carers of children under five years of age that can be downloaded [HERE](#).
- NHS North West London continuously update its website with information and support materials: <https://www.nwlondonics.nhs.uk/>
- For more advice visit: [UKHSA Group Strep A blog](#).

Thank you

Any questions?