

# Scarlet Fever

Scarlet fever is highly contagious it is caused by an infection from a bacterium known as haemolytic streptococci. The bacteria make a toxin (poison) that can cause the scarlet-coloured rash from which the illness gets its name. Scarlet fever usually follows a sore throat (strep throat) or skin infection (impetigo). The contagious period for scarlet fever ranges from about 12 hours after exposure to the bacteria, even if the individual shows no symptoms. Anyone can catch scarlet fever but it usually affects children aged between four and eight. Incubation period is one to four days.

The condition spreads when the infected person coughs or sneezes and the bacteria is transmitted into the air.

## Symptoms may include:

- Rash that usually begins looking like bad sunburn with tiny bumps.  
The rash usually appears first on the neck and face often leaving a clear unaffected area around the mouth.
- It spreads to the chest and back then to the rest of the body. It may itch. The rash usually appears 12 to 48 hours after the fever.
- Fever above 38.3 Celsius
- Tonsils may appear red, swollen and dotted with whitish specks of pus
- White coating on the tongue which peels a few days later leaving the tongue looking red and swollen. (known as strawberry tongue)
- loss of appetite
- A general feeling of being unwell



## Treatment

- Scarlet fever needs to be diagnosed by a doctor; a throat swab is taken for confirmation.
- Antibiotics will be prescribed for around 10 days; symptoms usually start to clear after a few days of antibiotics, the whole course must be completed to make sure the infection is fully cleared.
- Drink plenty of cool fluids,
- Paracetamol may be given to relieve aches and pains and reduce a fever.
- Ensure they have plenty of rest.
- If the rash itches ensure that the finger nails are trimmed short so skin is not damaged through scratching. Calamine lotion can relieve the itch.

## Prevention

- Good hand hygiene is the most important and effective way of preventing spread of the infection.

***If your child has scarlet fever please inform the nursery and keep your child at home until they are symptom free.***

For further information and advice please contact the Nursing Team