



Headteachers and Principals of Reading Schools

By email

05 December 2022

Scarlet Fever cases - update

Dear Colleague,

You will be aware that we are seeing higher numbers of cases of Scarlet Fever than usual for this time of year. Scarlet fever is usually a mild illness, but it is highly infectious. Therefore, look out for symptoms in your child, which include a sore throat, headache, and fever, along with a fine, pinkish or red body rash with a sandpapery feel. On darker skin, the rash can be more difficult to detect visually but will have a sandpapery feel. Contact NHS 111 or your GP if you suspect your child has scarlet fever.

Whilst for the vast majority of children this is a mild illness, early treatment with antibiotics will help avoid more serious illness such as pneumonia or a bloodstream infection.

If a child has scarlet fever, parents should keep them at home until at least 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment to avoid spreading the infection to others.

Scarlet fever is caused by bacteria called group A streptococci. These bacteria also cause other respiratory and skin infections such as strep throat and impetigo. In very rare occasions, the bacteria can get into the bloodstream and cause an illness called invasive Group A strep (iGAS). While still uncommon, there has been an increase in invasive Group A strep cases this year, particularly in children under 10.

Keeping children at home with Scarlet Fever will reduce the spread of infection. Early treatment will help reduce symptoms and the risk of more serious illness.

Currently, there is no evidence that a new strain is circulating. The increase is most likely related to high amounts of circulating bacteria and social mixing.

Parents should look out for the following symptoms, and call 111 if they are concerned;

- their child is getting worse
- their child is feeding or eating much less than normal

Civic Offices, Bridge Street
Reading RG1 2LU

T 0118 937 3641
E info@BrighterFuturesforChildren.org
BrighterFuturesforChildren.org

Delivering children's services on
behalf of Reading Borough Council
Registered in England and Wales.
Limited Company No. 11293709

- their child has had a dry nappy for 12 hours or more or shows other [signs of dehydration](#)
- their baby is under 3 months and has a temperature of 38°C, or is older than 3 months and has a temperature of 39°C or higher
- their baby feels hotter than usual when you touch their back or chest, or feels sweaty
- their child is very tired or irritable

Parents should Call 999 or go to A&E if:

- their child is having difficulty breathing – you may notice grunting noises or their tummy sucking under their ribs
- there are pauses when their child breathes
- their child's [skin, tongue or lips are blue](#)
- their child is floppy and will not wake up or stay awake

It is unlikely that your school will need to close but if you have any concerns or are seeing an increased number of cases in your school, please contact us as your local leads, who will seek advice as appropriate from UKHSA regarding any additional measures which may be recommended.

What is important at this stage is that parents seek swift medical advice on symptoms. There are lots of viruses that cause sore throats, colds and coughs circulating. These should resolve without medical intervention. However, children can on occasion develop a bacterial infection on top of a virus and that can make them more unwell, so advice should be sought where there is concern.

Thank you as ever for your support.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Tracy Daszkiewicz
Director of Public Health



Brian Grady
Interim Executive Director, Children's
Services, Education and Early Help