

6 December 2022



West Berkshire District Council  
Council Offices  
Market Street  
Newbury  
RG14 5LD

Dear Parent,

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 your child has scarlet fever, 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 cases, 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 at home 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;

- 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 38°C, or is older than 3 months and has a temperature of 39°C 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

What is important at this stage is that you seek 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