



Factsheet on Scarlet Fever

What is Scarlet Fever?

It is a bacterial infection that causes a pinch-red rash. It is also known as 'Scarletina'.

It is most common in the late winter and spring.

How is Scarlet Fever spread?

Scarlet Fever is usually spread by:

- breathing in bacteria in droplets from an infected person's cough or sneezes
- sharing objects contaminated by the secretions of an infected person e.g. hankies, clothes, toys
- contact with somebody with a streptococcal skin infection

What are the symptoms of Scarlet Fever?

- Scarlet Fever often starts with a sore throat, headache and fever and swelling of the glands in the neck.
- The bright red rash (from which the infection takes its name) appears on the 2nd day and can be mild or widely spread
- The rash is usually fine and red, will 'blanch' (fade) under pressure, and feels like sandpaper
- The rash mainly occurs on the neck, chest, in the folds of the underarm, elbows, groin, and on the inner thighs

- White coating on the tongue which peels a few days later leaving a red swollen tongue (strawberry tongue).
- During recovery, the skin can peel, particularly from the fingers and toes

What is the treatment for Scarlet Fever?

- Antibiotics are recommended for Scarlet Fever as they reduce the time you are infectious, speeds up recovery and reduces the risk of complications.
- With treatment, the infection rarely causes any serious complications

How long should I stay off work, school or nursery?

- Stay off work, school or nursery for 24 hours after starting antibiotics.

Further advice on any of the contents of this leaflet may be obtained from your community infection prevention and control team or Greater Manchester health protection team:

This factsheet has been reviewed by a multi-disciplinary team from the North West and local Programme lead from Greater Manchester Health Protection Team:

Further information may be available from www.nhs.uk