



Walsall Council

Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub

Date 07 December 2022
Ref: SG/vt
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Dear Parent / Carer

Re: Update on Group A Strep and scarlet fever

There has been an increasing amount of information in the news over the last few days about an illness circulating in children called 'Group A strep' or 'Strep A'. I understand some parents may be worried and I fully appreciate the concern.

Group A strep is a common bacteria. Lots of us carry it in our throats and on our skin and it doesn't always result in illness. However, it does cause a number of infections, some mild and some more serious.

In some cases, infection with group A strep causes scarlet fever. I want to reassure you, in many children, this is usually a mild illness and it rarely can cause complications. Streptococcal infections can spread between children easily.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the signs, symptoms and the actions to be taken if you think that you or your child might have scarlet fever.

Signs and symptoms of scarlet fever

There are lots of infections circulating and for most children these should resolve without requiring medical treatment. Look out for symptoms in your child, including,

- Sore throat
- Headache
- Fever
- 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

In very rare cases Group A Strep bacteria can enter a person's bloodstream. This can cause an illness called invasive group A strep (iGAS). Whilst still very uncommon, there has been an increase in iGAS cases this year, particularly in children under 10 years old. It is very rare for children with scarlet fever to develop iGAS infection.

Seek help from the NHS

Please trust your own judgement as a parent/carer. 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 child is very tired or irritable
- 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

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

Protect your children by getting the flu vaccination

It is also important that children from two years upwards are protected from seasonal flu with the vaccine. It is not too late to come forward and get the vaccine, as this will help provide the best protection for them against flu. Find out more on NHS Black Country ICB website: <https://blackcountry.icb.nhs.uk/your-health/health-advice/flu/flu-nasal-spray-children>

Stay home if unwell

School staff remain vigilant of signs and symptoms of winter illnesses. If your child is unwell, please can they remain at home until they feel better. This will help to stop infectious diseases spreading in our school.

Help stop the spread

It is important to continue with the simple prevention measures we were all used to during COVID-19. They do make a difference and can help to protect us against other viruses including flu and Norovirus, as well as Covid. Please can I encourage you to continue to:

- Wash hands frequently as this help to kill viruses and bacteria
- Use a tissue to catch coughs and sneezes and wash hands after or use hand sanitiser
- Keep away from others when feeling unwell
- Get vaccinated

More information on Strep A is available on the UKHSA website

<https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2022/12/05/group-a-strep-what-you-need-to-know>

Thank you again for your continued support.



Stephen Gunther
Director of Public Health