



UK Health Security Agency North West

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To: Educational settings in the NW

29 March 2023

Dear all,

Further to our communications on 09 December 2022 regarding scarlet fever, we are writing with an important update.

Please be advised the GAS educational settings helpline will be stood down from 6pm on 31st of March 2023.

Schools and nurseries should contact their UKHSA Health Protection Team if:

- You have one or more cases of chickenpox or flu in a class that has scarlet fever at the same time. This is because infection with scarlet fever and either chickenpox or flu at the same time can result in more serious illness.
- You are experiencing an outbreak of scarlet fever in a setting or class that provides care or education to children who are clinically vulnerable.
- A scarlet fever outbreak continues for over 3 weeks, despite taking steps to control it.
- Any child or staff member is hospitalised or has died with group A Strep (GAS) infection

If you have two or more cases of scarlet fever and do not meet any of the criteria above, please follow national UKHSA guidance and advice. For ease of reference a summary of this has been provided below.

For any scarlet fever outbreak, please follow the infection control advice as outlined below. Signs and symptoms of scarlet fever are also included below as a reminder.

Actions to take

- In nurseries and schools it is recognised that infections can be spread through direct physical contact between children and staff and through shared contact with surfaces such as table tops, taps, toys, electronic devices and handles. Maintaining an ongoing emphasis on **environmental cleaning, hand washing, respiratory hygiene, and ensuring staff and children who are unwell remaining away from the setting**, will help reduce transmission of most infections within your setting. **These measures, alongside improved ventilation where possible, are particularly important when respiratory viruses are also circulating.** Ensure any cuts or scrapes are thoroughly cleaned and covered with waterproof dressings to help prevent invasive infection.
- Children and adults with scarlet fever should **not attend** nursery / school / work until **24 hours** after starting appropriate antibiotic treatment for scarlet fever.

- Whilst scarlet fever is circulating it is especially important that any children and adults with chickenpox do stay off nursery or school until all their blisters have dried over, which is at least 5 days after they first appeared.

Signs and symptoms of scarlet fever

- Scarlet fever is a common childhood infection caused by Streptococcus pyogenes, or group A streptococcus (GAS). The early symptoms of scarlet fever include sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting. After 12 to 48 hours the characteristic red, pinhead rash develops, typically first appearing on the chest and stomach, then rapidly spreading to other parts of the body, and giving the skin a sandpaper-like texture. The scarlet rash may be harder to spot on darker skin, although the 'sandpaper' feel should be present. Patients typically have flushed cheeks and pallor around the mouth. This may be accompanied by a 'strawberry tongue'. As the child improves peeling of the skin can occur.

Further guidance

More information about scarlet fever can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scarlet-fever-symptoms-diagnosis-treatment>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/scarlet-fever/>

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

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/12/07/strep-a-and-scarlet-fever-what-are-they-and-what-are-the-symptoms-information-for-parents-schools-colleges-and-early-years-providers/>

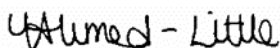
Guidance on exclusion for a range of infectious diseases can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities>

Specific guidance for under 5s for this winter can be found at:

<https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2022/10/25/5-ways-to-protect-your-under-5s-this-winter/>

Yours sincerely



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