

## HOW DO I PROTECT MYSELF?

Scarlet fever is spread by saliva from those who have this infection. It can also be caught from any drinking glass or cutlery they have used. To protect yourself from getting this illness you should:

- Wash your hands
- Not share utensils or drinks with an infected person
- Dispose of tissues promptly

If you think you or your child have scarlet fever:

- Contact your GP or NHS 111 as soon as possible
- Make sure the prescribed course of antibiotics is taken. Although you or your child may feel better quickly you must complete the full course of treatment to ensure that the bacteria do not remain in your throat after you have recovered.
- Stay at home away from nursery, school or work for at least 24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment to avoid spreading the infection.

You can stop the spread of infection through frequent hand washing and by not sharing eating utensils, clothes, bedding or towels. All contaminated tissues should be disposed of immediately.

**This leaflet gives general advice. For further information please ask either the nursing or medical staff who are providing your care and treatment or contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 01386 502552.**

If you would like this leaflet in a different language, larger print size, in audio, Braille or any other format please contact the

PALS team by phone on

☎ 01905 760020;

by letter ✉ Communications,

Worcestershire Health and Care Trust,  
2 Kings Court, Charles Hasting Way,  
Worcester. WR5 1JR.

or by email 📧:

[WHCNHS.communications@nhs.net](mailto:WHCNHS.communications@nhs.net)

If you would like more information about scarlet fever please visit the nhs choices website [www.nhs.uk/](http://www.nhs.uk/)

If you have any concerns about someone with scarlet fever contact your GP or NHS 111.



Worcestershire  
Health and Care  
NHS Trust



## Scarlet Fever

### *What is it?*

### *Your questions answered*

## **An Information Leaflet for Patients and Staff**

## WHAT IS IT?

Scarlet fever is a fairly common childhood illness. It is caused by bacteria (streptococci), the same bacteria can also cause impetigo and can be found on the skin or in the throat and do not always cause a problem. Scarlet fever is characterised by a rash which usually occurs with a sore throat.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The first symptoms often include a sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting. After 12-48 hours the characteristic fine red rash develops (it feels like sandpaper if you touch it) and disappears momentarily when pressed. It appears most commonly on the neck, chest, under the arms, elbows and inner thighs. The rash does not usually affect the face which is flushed, a fever may also develop and individuals will feel tired and unwell. During convalescence, the skin usually peels on the fingers and toes.

## IS IT INFECTIOUS?

Yes, to close contacts of the patient and rarely by indirect contact through objects or hands.

## WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

Scarlet fever is mainly a childhood disease with most cases occurring in children under 10 years old. Adults of all ages can catch scarlet fever but this is much less common. Once you have had scarlet fever you are unlikely to get it again.

## WHAT IS THE INCUBATION PERIOD?

The time taken from contact with the bacteria until the illness starts is short, usually 2-5 days but can be between 1-7 days.

## IS THERE ANY TREATMENT?

The usual treatment for scarlet fever is a 10 day course of antibiotics. The fever will usually lessen within 24 hours but it is important that the whole course is taken. If scarlet fever is not treated with antibiotics it can be infectious for 2-3 weeks. Provided all prescribed antibiotics are taken most cases will not infect others after 24 hours of treatment. Having treatment also reduces the likelihood of any complications.

## HOW SOON CAN THE PERSON RETURN TO WORK/THE CARE SETTING?

Current guidance advises that children should not return to nursery or school settings and adults not return to work until a minimum of 24 hours after starting treatment, after that they can return when they feel well again.

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF SOMEONE HAS THE ILLNESS?

Consult your doctor who will confirm the diagnosis and decide about treatment.

- The infected person should rest whilst they have a fever.
- Keep a child or adult with fever cool by reducing clothing and bed clothes and by giving paracetamol as prescribed on the bottle.
- If possible, babies and people with low resistance to infection should avoid contact with the infected person.

