



7 December 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Strep A and Scarlet Fever

I am writing to provide you with a copy of a letter from the Senior Health Protection Manager, Public Health – Bradford Council, that has been sent to all schools in the Bradford District. The letter contains some advice and guidance to schools regarding the severe cases of group A Streptococcus and Scarlet Fever. Currently we have two confirmed cases of Scarlet Fever and two confirmed cases of Strep A.

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Dear colleagues,

Re: Scarlet fever and invasive Strep A disease

Following recent confirmation of some deaths caused by invasive group A Streptococcus (iGAS) infection in children, we are writing to update you on the current situation regarding scarlet fever and other GAS infections and provide some advice on potentially severe cases.

Notifications of scarlet fever to UKHSA have been above the levels expected for this time of the year. So far this season there have also been 6 recorded deaths within 7 days of an invasive GAS diagnosis in children under 10 in England. This rare and severe disease usually follows from scarlet fever cases. 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.

Scarlet fever

Scarlet fever is a common childhood infection, usually mild but highly infectious. It is caused by a bacteria called group A streptococcus (GAS) which also causes sore throat and impetigo. The early symptoms of scarlet fever include sore throat, headache, fever, nausea, and vomiting, followed by a fine, pinkish, or red body rash with a sandpapery feel. The rash may be harder to spot on darker skin, but the sandpapery feel will usually be present. Other common symptoms are flushed cheeks, pallor around the mouth and a 'strawberry-like' tongue.

Parents should contact NHS 111 or their GP if they suspect a child has scarlet fever, because early treatment of scarlet fever with antibiotics reduces the risk of complications such as pneumonia or a bloodstream infection. Children with scarlet fever should stay at home until at least 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment to avoid spreading the infection to others. They can return to school/nursery after 24h of antibiotic use if they do not have a fever anymore.

Invasive group A Strep infection

In very rare occasions, the bacteria can get into the bloodstream and cause an illness called invasive Group A strep (iGAS). The initial signs of iGAS are the same of other severe infectious diseases. As a parent or teacher, if you feel that a child seems seriously unwell, you should trust your own judgement. Here is some general advice for parents:

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 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 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

Infection prevention and control

During periods of high incidence of scarlet fever there may also be an increase in outbreaks in schools, nurseries, and other childcare settings. Good hand and respiratory hygiene (washing hands for 20 seconds, using a tissue to catch coughs and sneezes) remain the most important steps in preventing and controlling spread of infection. No routine contact tracing or further isolation are usually required.

For additional information on scarlet fever symptoms and treatment see this:

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

For information on outbreak management see:

- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/771139/Guidelines_for_the_public_health_management_of_scarlet_fever_outbreaks_.pdf

And here is the latest UKHSA press release on group A strep infection, from 2 December 2022:

- [UKHSA update on scarlet fever and invasive Group A strep - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Kind regards,

Jorge Zepeda

Senior Health Protection Manager

Public Health – Bradford Council

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As with COVID-19 we continue to monitor cases of any infection and ensure there is routine cleaning around the school throughout the day. As explained in the guidance, please contact NHS 111 if you have any concerns and please contact school if there is a confirmed case in your household.

Yours sincerely



Ian Morrel

Headteacher