

Frequently asked questions- Group A Strep and Scarlet fever

Group A Strep and Scarlet Fever

Q. What is the difference between Group A Strep and Scarlet fever?

A. Scarlet Fever is caused by Group A Strep when the bacteria starts producing a toxin that causes a rash. When a healthcare professional diagnoses a child with Scarlet Fever they are required to notify the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

Q. I have cases of Group A Strep being reported by parents in my school what actions should I take?

A. Group A Strep is a common bacterial infection which typically causes infections such as scarlet fever, tonsillitis, and impetigo. No additional actions are required above and beyond standard hygiene measures such as regular cleaning, regular hand washing and respiratory hygiene measures (e.g. covering coughs and sneezes). The child may be unwell and should stay at home if too unwell to be in school. If they are well, children are not infectious after 24 hours on antibiotic treatment and can return to school once they're feeling well enough after this period.

Q. I have cases of Group A Strep should I cancel events and start bubbles again like we did for Covid.

A. No, this is not the same as Covid. The school can run as usual.

Q. Do I need to notify the LA or UKHSA of a single case of scarlet fever?

A. No, the diagnosing clinician has a duty to report this to UKHSA

Q. I have several cases of scarlet fever being reported by parents – what actions should I take?

A. You should contact UKHSA in the following circumstances:

- Setting has one or more cases of chickenpox or flu in the 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.
- Setting is experiencing an outbreak of scarlet fever in a setting / class that provides care or education to children who are clinically vulnerable.
- The outbreak continues for over 2 weeks, despite taking steps to control it.
- Any child or staff member is admitted to hospital with any Group A Strep (GAS) infection (or there is a death).
- Email: eastofenglandhpt@ukhsa.gov.uk or Phone: 0300 303 8537

If an educational setting has two or more cases of scarlet fever and do **not** meet any of the criteria above, they do not need to report this to the health protection team currently. They are advised to contact the national helpline: 03333056671 Guidance on definition and management of outbreaks of scarlet fever in education and child care settings can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1110540/Guidelines_for_the_public_health_management_of_scarlet_fever_outbreaks.pdf

UKHSA will complete a risk assessment of all outbreak notifications and will follow-up where a need for additional measures or support to manage an outbreak is identified.

Any child diagnosed with scarlet fever should remain at home and not return to the setting until 24hrs after commencing antibiotics. If the child cannot have antibiotics for any reason, they should not attend the setting until the scarlet fever symptoms have resolved. There is a template letter which can be sent to parents to notify them of an outbreak in the setting if you wish to use it. It can be found in appendix 5 of this document

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1110540/Guidelines_for_the_public_health_management_of_scarlet_fever_outbreaks.pdf

Again, standard measures such as cleaning, hand and respiratory hygiene should be followed. All other school activities can continue.

Q. If we have known cases of Group A Strep or scarlet fever, should we write to parents to tell them?

A. You may wish to provide some information to help manage any concerns raised. If there is increased anxiety among parents, use your discretion regarding informing parents but remember not to disclose any details of individual children or staff. A parental letter is provided for this purpose by UKHSA.

Q. Should I ask for a negative throat swab before allowing a child into my setting?

A. No, testing to attend is not required. Any testing for Group A Strep will be at the discretion of a healthcare professional. If a child is unwell, has a rash or fever then they should remain at home and consider getting an assessment from their GP. If their GP diagnoses scarlet fever, the child may return to the setting 24 hours after commencing antibiotic treatment. If they choose not to take antibiotics, they may return to the setting when their symptoms have resolved, and they are well again.

Q. I have not had a call from UKHSA regarding a child who has scarlet fever, when will they call?

A. UKHSA will assess each outbreak and only follow up following a risk assessed approach. (An 'outbreak' is defined as 2 or more probable or confirmed cases attending the same school, nursery or other childcare setting within 10 days of each other). Cases of scarlet fever are higher than normal at the moment and not every school will receive a call this is because there may be no additional actions above and beyond the standard actions detailed in the guidance above.

Q. I have an outbreak what immediate actions can we take ourselves?

A. Schools where outbreaks occur are advised to:

- Make sure that all children and employees that are ill go home and don't return until they are well.
- Tell parents and visitors about the cases of illness.
- Remind employees to wash their hands throughout the day. Hand washing needs to be done after changing nappies or helping children to use the toilet and prior to eating.
- Make sure that all cuts, scrapes and wounds are cleaned and covered. This also applies to bites.

- Carry out regular cleaning throughout the day, especially hand contact surfaces - this is covered in [Managing Outbreaks and Incidents](#). Advice may also be given to increase cleaning of areas with particular attention to hand touch surfaces that can be easily contaminated such as door handles, toilet flushes and taps and communal touch areas. These should ideally be cleaned using a disinfectant.
- Consider stopping messy play, removing hard to clean soft toys, not going on visits outside of your setting and not allowing children to share drinks.
- Once cases have stopped (no new cases or illness for 10 days), do a full clean of buildings (including toys, carpets etc)

Q. I have pregnant staff members – what advice should I give them?

A. Pregnant staff members should contact their GP or midwife if they are concerned, especially if they develop symptoms of scarlet fever or group A Strep infection.

Q. What can I do to help minimise the risk of having an outbreak?

A. All settings should be maintaining good standards of cleaning and following the infection prevention control advice within this guidance on a day to basis already [Health protection in children and young people settings, including education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

In addition good hand and respiratory hygiene are important for stopping the spread of many bugs. By teaching your child how to wash their hands properly with soap and warm water for 20 seconds, using a tissue to catch coughs and sneezes, and keeping away from others when feeling unwell, they will be able to reduce the risk of picking up, or spreading, infections

In addition to the guidance links, you may find this blog useful!

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