

Dear Parents/Carers

Re: Increased levels of Group A Strep infection

You may have seen news reports about a high number of children with Group A Strep (which includes scarlet fever) in the UK, and Lewisham is seeing the same. This letter gives some further information from Lewisham's Director of Public Health about scarlet fever. We have been in touch with the UKHSA and local authority and have risk assessed our situation. Currently we do not need to take any further action.

Signs and symptoms of scarlet fever

Scarlet fever is usually a mild infection which can be easily treated with antibiotics. While it is mild, it is very infectious. The first symptoms to look out for include a **sore throat, headache, and persistent fever** (of 39°C or more), along with a fine, pinkish or red body rash with a sandpapery feel. On darker skin, the rash can be more difficult to see but will have a sandpapery feel. The rash often develops a couple of days after the first symptoms.

What should I do if I think my child has scarlet fever?

Contact NHS 111 or your GP, because early treatment of scarlet fever with antibiotics is important to reduce the risk of complications. If your child has scarlet fever, keep them at home until at least 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment to avoid spreading the infection to others.

In very rare circumstances, bacteria can get into the bloodstream and cause serious illness – called invasive Group A strep (iGAS). This is still uncommon. As a parent, if you feel that your child seems seriously unwell, you should trust your own judgement.

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 three 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
- your child is very tired or irritable

There is further information and images on this website <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/scarlet-fever/> and <https://brownskinmatters.com/588>

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

How can I help my child to stay well?

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 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.

Please look out for symptoms, keep your child at home if they have a sore throat, headache and persistent fever and let us know as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M Harpham', written in a cursive style.

Dr M Harpham

Headteacher