



8th March 2016

Dear Head Teacher

Re: Increase in notifications of scarlet fever

I am writing to inform you of an increase in notifications of scarlet fever to Public Health England above seasonal expected levels.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the signs, symptoms and the actions to be taken if you become aware of an outbreak at your school. .

Signs and symptoms of scarlet fever

Scarlet fever is a common childhood infection caused by the bacteria *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.

Infection control advice

In schools and nurseries infections can be spread through mucus secretions, aerosols and through shared contact with contaminated surfaces such as table tops, taps, toys and door handles. As per national *Guidance on Infection Control in Schools and other Child Care Settings*, children and adults with suspected scarlet fever should be **excluded** from nursery / school / work. They may return to their place of work, if they are feeling better but only **24 hours** after commencement of antibiotics. The antibiotic course for a Scarlet fever infection is 10 days and it is important that the full course of antibiotics is completed, even if the patient has started to feel better. Good hygiene practice such as hand washing remains the most important step in preventing and controlling spread of infection.

Recommended actions if you suspect an outbreak at your school

Contact your Health Protection Team on 0300 3038162 for advice and information. This team can provide you with a letter to cascade to staff and parents if you think that would be appropriate.

Although scarlet fever is usually a mild illness, patients can develop complications and if you have any concerns about a child in attendance at the school, seek medical advice.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Wade', written in a cursive style.

Mike Wade
Deputy Director of Health Protection
mike.wade@phe.gov.uk