

Westminster City Hall
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Monday 5th December 2022

Dear parents and carers,

Re: Scarlet Fever and invasive Group A Strep (iGAS)

Last week I wrote to you about high number of cases of scarlet fever in North West London with advice on what to look out for in your children and what to do.

You will have seen media reports over the weekend that tragically some children have died as a result of being infected with Group A Strep. This is the bacteria that can cause scarlet fever and severe sore throats. I would like to remind you of the symptoms to look out for, and what to do should your children become unwell.

Group A Strep infection is usually a mild illness that can be easily treated with antibiotics. But in rare circumstances, this bacteria can get into the bloodstream and cause serious illness – called invasive Group A strep. This is still uncommon. However, it is important that parents and carers are on the lookout for symptoms and see a doctor as quickly as possible so that their child can be treated, and we can stop the infection becoming serious.

Symptoms

The first signs of scarlet fever can be flu-like symptoms, including a high temperature, a sore throat and swollen neck glands (a large lump on the side of your neck). A rash appears 12 to 48 hours later. It looks like small, raised bumps and starts on the chest and tummy, then spreads. On darker skin, the rash can be more difficult to detect visually. On all skin types it will have a sandpaper feel.

Contact NHS 111 or your GP if you suspect your child has scarlet fever. Early treatment with antibiotics is important to reduce any 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. Please also inform your school or nursery.

If you think your child is getting worse

Make sure you talk to a health professional (NHS 111 or your GP) if your child is showing signs of deteriorating after a bout of scarlet fever, a sore throat, or a respiratory infection. As a parent, if you feel that your child seems seriously unwell, you should trust your own judgement.

Stopping the spread of infections

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.

Sources of advice on how to manage childhood illnesses

For more advice and advice in other languages about childhood illnesses and how to manage them, visit the NHS website www.nhs.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Raleigh
Director of Public Health