

Scarlet Fever

Scarlet fever is a contagious infection that mostly affects young children. It's easily treated with antibiotics.

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. The rash makes your skin feel rough, like sandpaper. On white skin the rash looks pink or red. On brown and black skin it might be harder to see a change in colour, but you can still feel the rash and see the raised bumps.

A white coating also appears on the tongue. This peels, leaving the tongue red, swollen and covered in little bumps (called "strawberry tongue"). The rash does not appear on the face, but the cheeks can look red. The redness may be harder to see on brown and black skin.

The symptoms are the same for children and adults, although scarlet fever is less common in adults.

See a GP if you or your child:

- have scarlet fever symptoms
- do not get better in a week (after seeing a GP)
- have scarlet fever and chickenpox at the same time
- are ill again, weeks after scarlet fever got better – this can be a sign of a complication, such as [rheumatic fever](#)
- are feeling unwell and have been in contact with someone who has scarlet fever

Scarlet fever is very easily spread. Check with a GP before you go in. They may suggest a phone consultation

What happens at your GP appointment

GPs can often diagnose scarlet fever by looking at your tongue and rash. Sometimes they may:

- wipe a cotton bud around the back of your throat to test for bacteria
- arrange a blood test

Treating scarlet fever

GP will prescribe antibiotics. These will:

- help you get better quicker
- reduce the chance of a serious illnesses, such as pneumonia
- make it less likely that you'll pass the infection on to someone else

Taking antibiotics

Keep taking the antibiotics until they're finished, even if you feel better.

Things you can do yourself

You can relieve symptoms of scarlet fever by:

- drinking cool fluids
- eating soft foods if you have a sore throat
- taking painkillers like paracetamol to bring down a high temperature (do not give aspirin to children under 16)
- using calamine lotion or antihistamine tablets to ease itching

How long scarlet fever lasts

Scarlet fever lasts for around 1 week.

You can spread scarlet fever to other people up to 6 days before you get symptoms until 24 hours after you take your 1st dose of antibiotics.

If you do not take antibiotics, you can spread the infection for 2 to 3 weeks after your symptoms start.

Important: If you or your child has scarlet fever, stay away from nursery, school or work for 24 hours after you take the 1st dose of antibiotics.

Is scarlet fever dangerous?

Scarlet fever can be a serious illness, but thanks to antibiotics, it's less common than it used to be and easier to treat. But cases of scarlet fever have increased in recent years. Complications from scarlet fever are rare. They can happen during or in the weeks after the infection, and can include:

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| •ear infection | •throat abscess | •sinusitis |
| •pneumonia | •meningitis | •rheumatic fever |

Pregnancy advice

There's no evidence to suggest that getting scarlet fever during pregnancy will harm your baby. But it can make you feel unwell, so it's best to avoid close contact with anyone who has it. Contact a GP if you get symptoms. Many of the antibiotics used for scarlet fever are considered to be safe to take during pregnancy.

How to avoid spreading scarlet fever

Scarlet fever is very infectious and can easily spread to other people.

To reduce the chance of spreading scarlet fever:

Do

wash your hands often with soap and water
use tissues to trap germs from coughs or sneezes
bin used tissues as quickly as possible

Don't

do not share cutlery, cups, towels, clothes,
bedding or baths with anyone who has symptoms of scarlet fever



Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day. If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.

For additional medical advice, if your symptoms or condition worsens:

Contact your GP

NHS 111:

Get help with your symptoms, NHS111:
Information to help you manage your health:

Telephone 111

<https://111.nhs.uk/>
www.nhs.uk

In an emergency telephone 999

Emergency Department (A&E)
Alexandra Hospital
Woodrow Drive
Redditch B98 7UB

Minor Injury Unit
Kidderminster Hospital
Bewdley Road
Kidderminster DY11 6RJ

Emergency Department (A&E)
Worcestershire Royal Hospital
Charles Hastings Way
Worcester WR5 1DD

Tel: 01527 512030

Tel: 01562 513039

Tel: 01905 760743