

Dear Parents and Carers,

08/12/22

## **Strep A**

As you may be aware from the news over the last week or so, there has been an increase in cases of Strep A in children across the UK. I am acutely aware of this, as are my team and so I write with information that I hope you will find useful.

At this time of year, there are lots of viruses that cause sore throats, colds and coughs which are often easily treatable. However, children can on occasion develop a bacterial infection on top of a virus and that can make them more unwell.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) issued a rare alert on Friday evening after a rise in cases across the country, telling parents to seek medical help as soon as possible if they detect signs in their children, to stop the infection becoming serious.

Deputy Director, UKHSA, said: *"We are seeing a higher number of cases of Group A strep this year than usual. The bacteria usually cause a mild infection producing sore throats or scarlet fever that can be easily treated with antibiotics. In very rare circumstances, this bacteria can get into the bloodstream and cause serious illness – called invasive Group A strep (iGAS). This is still uncommon; however, it is important that parents 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 from becoming serious".*

**Health officials are urging parents & carers to look out for symptoms of scarlet fever in children following the surge in cases driven by the recent increase in Strep A infections.**

## **How can I prevent Strep A?**

Good hand and respiratory hygiene are important for stopping the spread of many bugs. By teaching children 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 reducing infections.

## **What are the symptoms we need to look out for?**

Health officials say that the symptoms to look out for in your child include:

- a sore throat
- headache
- fever
- a fine, pinkish or red body rash with a sandpapery feel. On darker skin, the rash can be more difficult to detect visually but will still have a sandpapery feel.

The UKHSA advises contacting NHS 111 or your GP if you suspect your child has scarlet fever, because early treatment of the illness with antibiotics is important in reducing the risk of complications such as pneumonia or a bloodstream infection.

## **When should we seek medical help?**

If you feel that your child seems seriously unwell, you should trust your own judgement.

Health officials say you should 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 3 months old and has a temperature of 38C, or is older than 3 months and has a temperature of 39C 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
- In more serious cases, you should call 999 or go to A&E if:
- Your child is having difficulty breathing – you may notice grunting noises or their tummy sucking in 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

Latest updates can be found here:

[UK Health Security Agency - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Yours sincerely,

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