

8 December 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

Group A Streptococcus and Scarlet Fever – Information and Advice

You may have seen in the news that cases of Strep A and Scarlet Fever are on the rise in the UK. Whilst we acknowledge the heightened sense of worry amongst parents and carers, please be reassured that we have had no cases in Bohunt Worthing however, we recognise that you may have concerns and questions and we want to remain vigilant for our school community. We continue to follow all UK Health Security Agency specific advice (October 2022) for schools around continual reminders for hand hygiene; ventilation; using tissues to catch sneezes or coughing into sleeves and our cleaning regimes. All children should continue to attend schools unless they are advised otherwise by their medical adviser; we will work with any child who is unable to attend schools because of medical reasons.

See below advice and information from UK Health Security Agency:

Please remember that there are many viruses circulating that cause sore throats, colds and coughs. Generic medical advice is that these should resolve themselves without medical intervention and with the use of paracetamol and fluids to keep high temperatures down and the throat lubricated. However, children can on occasion develop a bacterial infection on top of a virus and that can make them more unwell.

Scarlet Fever is one of the illnesses that can be caused by bacteria called Group A Streptococcus (GAS). It is usually a mild illness but it is highly infectious. Therefore, look out for symptoms which include: sore throat, headache, and fever, plus 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 also have a sandpapery feel.

Contact NHS 111 or your GP if you suspect a child has Scarlet Fever, because early treatment with antibiotics is important to reduce the risk of complications such as pneumonia or a bloodstream infection. If your child has Scarlet Fever, you must keep them at home until at least 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment to avoid spreading the infection to others. Please do not return your child to school until the 24 hour period has expired. At present, siblings - if they are otherwise well - can continue to come to school unless your GP or NHS 111 advise against this.

In very rare occasions, Strep A bacteria can get into the bloodstream and cause an illness called invasive Group A strep (iGAS). While still uncommon, there has been an increase in invasive Group A strep cases this year, particularly in children under the age of 10.

To avoid the spread of illness, we remind all parents to keep their children at home if they display signs of infection.

The key symptoms to look for are mentioned above but, 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 3 months and has a temperature of 38 degrees centigrade or is older than 3 months and has a temperature of 39 degrees centigrade 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

Call 999 or go to A&E if:

- Your child is having difficulty breathing – you may notice grunting noises or their tummy sickening 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

Group A Streptococcus (GAS) is a bacterium which can colonise in the throat, skin and anogenital tract. It causes a diverse range of skin, soft tissue and respiratory tract infections, including:

- Tonsillitis
- Pharyngitis
- Scarlet fever
- Impetigo
- Cellulitis
- Pneumonia

GAS is spread by close contact between individuals, through respiratory droplets or direct skin contact. There can also be environmental spread by touching contaminated surfaces.

Good hand and respiratory hygiene are important for stopping the spread of many bugs. Washing hands properly with soap for 20 seconds, using a tissue to catch coughs and sneezes and keeping away from others when feeling unwell will be able to reduce the risk of picking up or spreading infections.

Resources: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/scarlet-fever/>

UKHSA update on scarlet fever and invasive Group A strep: GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Despite the sobering contents of this letter, may we take this opportunity to wish a very Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and restful festive break to all our students, parents and carers. We look forward to welcoming students back to school on Wednesday 4 January 2023.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Paul Collin

Headteacher