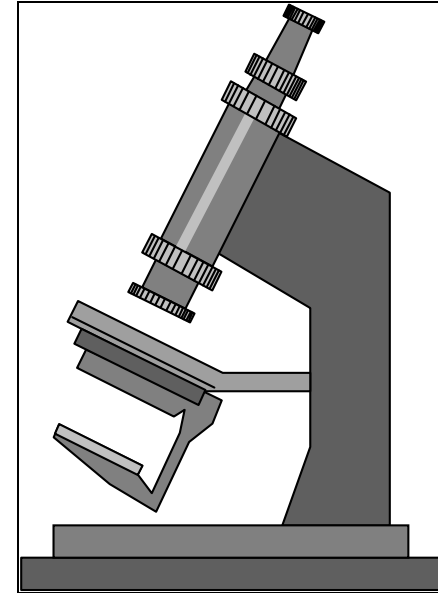


HPA North West

If you require more information about **Scarlet Fever**
please contact:

*The Community Infection Control Nurse at your
local Primary Care Trust (PCT)
or your local Health Protection Unit*



Scarlet Fever

Information produced by: Health Protection Agency North West

The Health Protection Agency is a new independent organisation dedicated to protecting people's health. It brings together the expertise formerly in a number of official organisations.

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INFORMATION LEAFLET

What is Scarlet Fever ?

It is a bacterial childhood infectious disease. It may also be referred to as 'Scarletina'.

It usually affects the pharynx (back of the mouth & throat) but may also affect the skin.

The disease tends to be most common in the late winter and spring.

How is Scarlet Fever spread ?

Scarlet Fever is usually spread by:

- the secretions from the nose and throat of an infected person – when they cough or sneeze.
- objects contaminated by the secretions of an infected person eg hankies, clothes, toys – though this method of spread is unusual.
- Contaminated foodstuffs, especially unpasteurised milk.

What is the incubation period of Scarlet Fever ?

- The incubation period (the period when someone has the infection but is not displaying symptoms) is usually 2-5 days, although it may be as short as 1 day and as long as 7 days.

What are the symptoms of Scarlet Fever ?

- The symptoms vary a great deal. In some cases there is only a sore throat and swelling of the glands in the neck.

- The tonsils may be covered by a patchy white discharge.
- The bright red rash (from which the disease takes its name) appears on the 2nd day and can be mild or widely spread.
- The rash is usually fine and red, will 'blanch' (fade) under pressure, and is commonly marked with points or punctures that feel like sandpaper to touch.
- The rash mainly occurs on the neck, chest, in the folds of the underarm, elbows, groin, and on the inner thighs.
- Typically, the rash does not involve the face, but there may be 'flushing' of the cheeks and paleness around the mouth and a strawberry coloured tongue.
- A high temperature (fever), nausea and vomiting sometimes occur in severe infections.
- During recovery, the skin can peel, particularly from the fingers and toes.

What is the treatment for Scarlet Fever ?

- If treated promptly with penicillin or an alternative antibiotic, the condition will quickly become non-infectious. However, untreated patients can be infectious for 2 – 3 weeks.
- These days with treatment, the infection rarely causes any complications.

How long should I stay off work, school or nursery ?

It is recommended that someone with Scarlet Fever should stay off work, school or nursery for at least 5 days after starting their antibiotic treatment.