

What is it Group Strep A?

Group Strep A is a bacterial type of germ that can cause scarlet fever. These bacteria also cause other respiratory and skin infections such as strep throat and impetigo (a skin infection).

These are usually mild illnesses, which although highly infectious, can be treated at home with antibiotics.

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

Symptoms

Look out for symptoms in your child, which include:

- Sore throat
- Headache
- Strawberry tongue or tonsils (swollen or bumpy or covered in white spots)
- A fine, pinkish or red body rash with rougher skin that feels like sandpaper. On darker skin the rash may be more difficult to see
- If your child is under 3 months old and has a temperature of 38°C or is older than 3 months and has a temperature of 39°C or higher (if you have a thermometer to check)
- If your child feels hotter than usual when you touch their back or chest or feels sweaty (if you don't have a thermometer to check)

Seeking help

Contact NHS 111 or your GP if you suspect your 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, keep them at home until at least 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment to avoid spreading the infection to others.

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
- Temperature has lasted more than 5 days
- Your baby is under 3 months and has a temperature of 38C, or is older than 3 months and has a temperature of 39C or higher
- 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 such as dark yellow, strong smelling pee, peeing less often than usual, feeling dizzy or lightheaded, feeling tired, sunken eyes or dry mouth, lips, tongue
- 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 sucking 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
- Your child has severe pains in their arms, legs, neck or back
- Your child has a painful, red area of skin, especially if it is getting bigger quickly

Spread and prevention

Group A strep is spread by close contact with an infected person. It can be passed on through coughs and sneeze or from a wound. It's important to:

- Teach your child to wash their hands properly with soap and warm water for 20 seconds
- Teach your child to catch coughs and sneezes into a tissue
- Keep your child away from others when they are feeling unwell