

Scarlet Fever and Strep A (GAS)

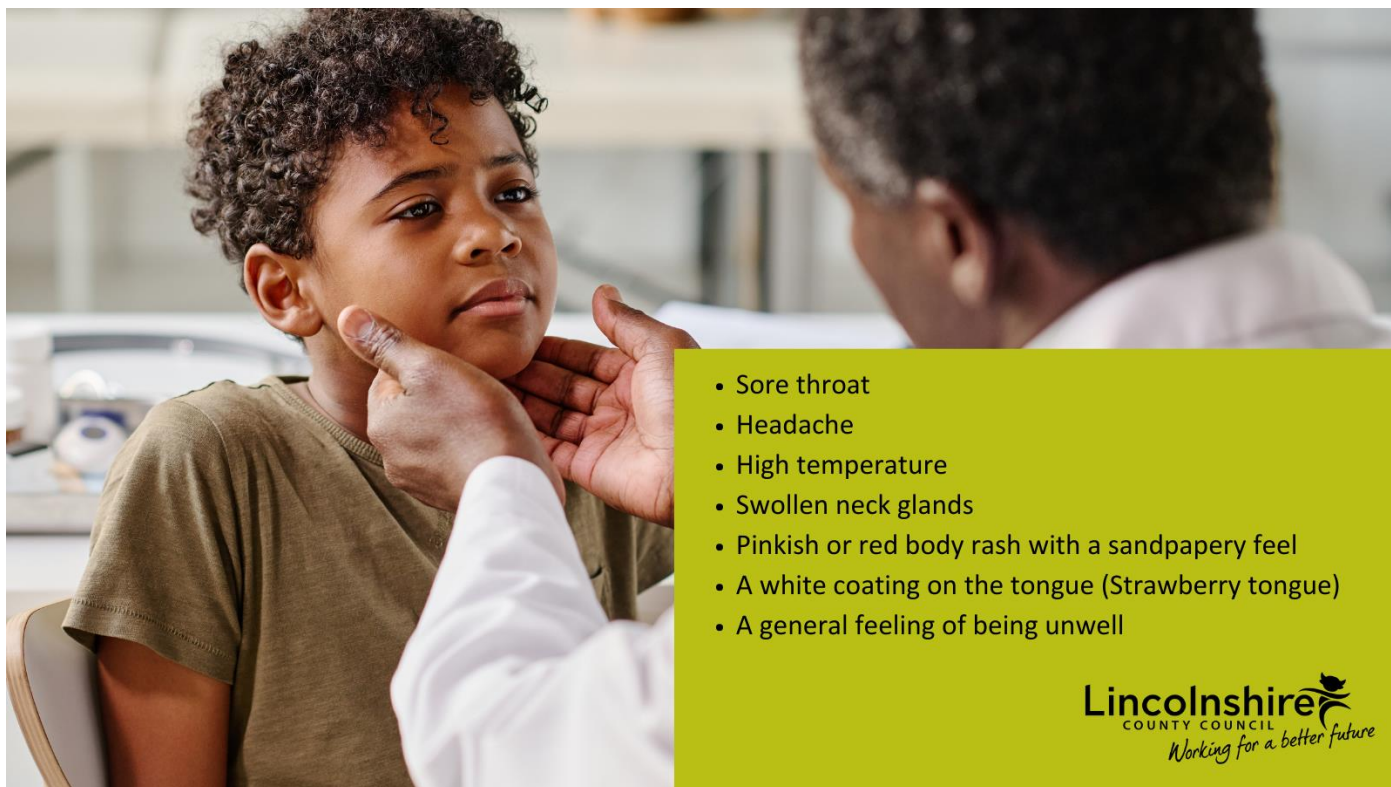
SCARLET FEVER AND STREP A

There has been a higher number of scarlet fever cases than usual for this time of year. Scarlet fever is usually a mild illness but is highly infectious. Scarlet fever is caused by a bacteria called group A streptococci (GAS) which can cause other respiratory and skin infections, including impetigo (a skin infection where small pustules join to form crusty yellow sores), tonsillitis and pharyngitis (sore throat).

There has also been a rise in lower respiratory tract Strep A infections over the past few weeks, which in some children can cause severe illness if the bacteria enters the blood stream. The most serious infections come from invasive group A strep, known as iGAS. Whilst iGAS infections are still uncommon, there has been an increase in cases this year, particularly in children under 10 and, sadly, a small number of deaths.

It is important, therefore, to treat children with signs of group A strep infections, like scarlet fever.

Scarlet fever symptoms to look out for include:



- Sore throat
- Headache
- High temperature
- Swollen neck glands
- Pinkish or red body rash with a sandpapery feel
- A white coating on the tongue (Strawberry tongue)
- A general feeling of being unwell

What to do if a child is unwell

If a child becomes seriously unwell, parents should be advised to contact 111 or their GP, particularly if the child's condition is getting worse, they are eating or drinking less, have a temperature above 39 degrees and are tired or irritable. Please only attend A&E in an emergency.

Parents are advised to call 999 or go to A&E if:

- The child is having difficulty breathing or there are changes in their breathing, for example pauses
- Skin, tongue, and lips are blue
- Is floppy and will not wake up or unable to stay awake

Education settings are advised to remain vigilant and refer to UKHSA guidance [Scarlet fever: managing outbreaks in schools and nurseries - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/scarlet-fever-managing-outbreaks-in-schools-and-nurseries). If you are informed by a parent that their child has confirmed Strep A, please ensure that this information **remains confidential**.

Some tops tips for managing outbreaks within the setting are:

- Encourage good hand and respiratory hygiene.
- Cleaning of the environment including equipment and toys, touch points such as taps, toilet flush handles and door handles.
- Children who are unwell should be advised to stay away from the setting until they are feeling better.
- If the child has scarlet fever, they can return to school 24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment providing they feel well enough to do so.
- Siblings or close contacts who are not affected can continue to attend the early years setting or school.
- Children who do not receive antibiotics can be contagious for up to 2 weeks, so it is important to encourage parents to contact their GP to avoid onward transmission.
- Thorough cleaning of the environment once the outbreak has been declared over.



Scarlet fever and Strep A cases must be reported to UKHSA. The East Midlands UKHSA team can be contacted on 0344 225 4524 or email emhpt@ukhsa.gov.uk. To aid information sharing and avoid duplication, please copy in the LA Health Protection Team upon notifying UKHSA via the following address healthprotectionteam@lincolnshire.gov.uk.