



What is Scarlet Fever?

Symptoms

- The first symptoms of scarlet fever often include a sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting. After 12 to 48 hours the characteristic fine red rash develops (if you touch it, it feels like sandpaper). Typically, it first appears on the chest and stomach, rapidly spreading to other parts of the body. On more darkly-pigmented skin, the scarlet rash may be harder to spot, although the 'sandpaper' feel should be present
- Fever over 38.3° C (101° F) or higher is common
- White coating on the tongue, which peels a few days later, leaving the tongue looking red and swollen (known as 'strawberry tongue')
- Swollen glands in the neck
- Feeling tired and unwell

It usually takes two to five days from infection before the first symptoms appear. However, the incubation period may be as short as one day and as long as seven days.

If you think you, or your child, have scarlet fever:

- See your family doctor as soon as possible
- Make sure that you/your child takes the full course of any antibiotics prescribed by the doctor
- Stay at home, away from school or work for at least 24 hours after starting treatment, to avoid spreading the infection
- You can help stop the spread of infection through frequent hand washing and by not sharing eating utensils, clothes, bedding and towels. All contaminated tissues or handkerchiefs should be washed, or disposed of immediately.

Scarlet fever is spread via the mucus and saliva of infected people. It may also be caught from any drinking glasses, plates or utensils they have used. To protect yourself from getting the illness you should:

- Wash your hands often
- Not share eating utensils with an infected person
- Wash, or dispose of, handkerchiefs and tissues contaminated by an infected person
- Be aware that you can catch scarlet fever by inhaling airborne droplets if someone with the illness coughs or sneezes in the air near you.