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## SELF-CARE INFORMATION ON SCARLET FEVER

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### Scarlet fever (scarlatina)



Characteristic red cheeks  
and rash of scarlet fever



A white coating  
on the tongue, and  
«strawberry tongue»

### What is Scarlet Fever?

Scarlet Fever is a bacterial infection that affects children. It is caused by the streptococcus bacteria which are found in our throats and on our skin.

Scarlet Fever is easily treated with antibiotics. If antibiotic treatment is started early, the chance of children developing complications is rare.

Scarlet fever occurs mostly in children aged 4-8 years.

### What are the signs and symptoms?

- Sore throat
- Flushed cheeks
- Red, swollen tongue
- Fever
- Typical red, rough (sandpaper) rash appears a couple of days after the sore throat. The rash often starts on the chest and stomach before spreading to the rest of the body.

## Does my child need any tests to confirm the diagnosis?

The doctor will usually be able to diagnose scarlet fever by seeing the typical rash and hearing what symptoms your child has. Occasionally a swab from your child's throat may be taken. This will be sent to the laboratory to see if the streptococcus bacteria grow.

## What treatments are available?

Scarlet fever is easily treated with antibiotics. Liquid penicillin is often used to treat children. These **must** be taken for seven days, even though most people get better after four to five days.

Your child will still be infectious for 24 hours after antibiotic treatment has started and they should not attend nursery or school during this period.

Additional treatments include:

- Paracetamol when necessary for fever, headache or throat pain.
- Eating soft foods and drinking plenty of cool liquids, particularly if the throat is very painful.
- Oral antihistamines and emollients to relieve the itch of rash.
- Keep fingernails short on young children to prevent them from damaging the skin.

The fever usually improves within 12-24 hours after starting antibiotics and most patients recover after 4-5 days with clearing of skin symptoms over several weeks.

## What happens if my child does not get treatment?

Without antibiotic treatment, your child will be infectious for one to two weeks after they became unwell. Rare, but serious complications (Rheumatic Fever and Pneumonia) are more likely to occur if antibiotics are **not** taken.

## *Useful contacts*

- Ask your pharmacist
- Patient UK - [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)
- NHS Choices, [www.nhs.uk/conditions/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/)

### *If you have further questions:*

Call the **practice** on *01285 653184* or *01285 653122*  
If you require **urgent** medical advice, call *111 (24 Hrs)*  
In an **emergency** call **999**