



What is scarlet fever?

Scarlet fever is a rash that sometimes occurs in people who have strep throat.

How do you get scarlet fever?

This illness can be spread by coming in contact with the sick person. The germ is carried in the mouth and nasal fluid. If you touch your mouth, nose or eyes after touching something that has these fluids on them, you may become sick. The rash itself is not contagious.

If you drink from the same glass or eat from the same plate as the sick person, you could also become sick.

What are the symptoms of scarlet fever?

The most common symptoms are:

- A rash that first appears as tiny red bumps on the chest and stomach. It may then spread all over the body. It looks like a sunburn and feels like a rough piece of sandpaper. It is usually redder in the arm pits and groin areas. The rash lasts two to five days. After the rash is gone, often the skin on the tips of the fingers and toes begins to peel.
- A flushed face with a pale area around the lips.
- A very red and sore throat. It can have white or yellow patches.
- A fever of 101° F or higher. Chills are often seen with the fever.
- Swollen glands in the neck.
- A whitish coating on the surface of the tongue. The tongue itself looks like a strawberry because the normal

bumps on the tongue look bigger.

Other less common symptoms are:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Headache
- Body aches

How is scarlet fever treated?

Your child will be given antibiotics. Follow the directions carefully. It is very important to finish all of the medicine. Never share any of this medicine with family or friends. Ask your doctor about over-the-counter medicine to lessen sore throat pain. A single antibiotic injection may be recommended instead of oral medicine.

Is there anything else I can do to make my child feel better?

Warm liquids like soup or cold foods like popsicles or milkshakes will help make a sore throat feel better. Offer these to your child often. The body needs a lot of fluid when it is sick with a fever. A cool mist humidifier will help to keep the air in your child's room moist. This will keep the throat from getting too dry and sorer. Rest is important.

How long is an infected person infectious to others?

A child stops being contagious after taking antibiotics for 24 hours even though he may be taking the antibiotics for 10 days or longer. Once a child has had scarlet fever, he usually has permanent immunity and a second case is rare.

## Scarlet Fever Fact Sheet – page 2

---

Do I need to keep my child home from school?

A child with scarlet fever should be kept home for at least 24 hours after starting treatment.

How can scarlet fever be prevented?

- Avoid sharing eating and drinking utensils like cups and silverware.
- Wash hands often to prevent the spread from person to person.

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for talking with a health care provider. If you have any questions about scarlet fever or think you may have it, call your health care provider.*