

Dear parents/carers,

Invasive group A streptococcal infection (iGAS)

As you are aware, there have been a number of reports in the press regarding iGAS. We appreciate this will be of concern to you, therefore we are sharing with you below the advice that schools have received from Public Health Wales.

The recommended actions are:

- Schools are to be aware of the possibility of this infection in children who become ill with a fever, sore throat or rash
- Parents of unwell children should be advised to seek medical advice for diagnosis and treatment
- A person with scarlet fever should withdraw from the school setting for 24 hours after the commencement of appropriate antibiotic treatment
- Good hand hygiene and avoidance of spread of respiratory secretions (as per influenza – ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’) can help to prevent the spread of infection

Signs and symptoms of scarlet fever

Scarlet fever, sometimes called scarlatina, is an infectious disease caused by group A streptococcus (GAS) bacteria.

It is highly infectious and can be caught through direct contact with an infected person or through the air via droplets from coughs or sneezes.

The characteristic symptom of scarlet fever is a widespread, fine pink-red rash that feels like sandpaper to touch. Other symptoms includes a high temperature, a flushed face and a red, swollen tongue.

Treatment is straightforward and usually involves a course of penicillin antibiotics.

Complications of scarlet fever and streptococcal infection

Most cases of scarlet fever cause no complications, especially if the condition is properly treated. However, complications in the early stages of the disease can include ear infection, throat abscess, sinusitis, pneumonia and meningitis.

Very rare complications include rheumatic fever, kidney damage, liver damage, bone infection, blood poisoning and toxic shock syndrome which can be life-threatening.

Early signs of invasive disease include: high fever, severe muscle aches, local muscle tenderness, or redness at the site of a wound. If you have concerns about invasive disease, then urgent medical advice must be sought.

The advice to parents is:

- Contact your GP, visit 111.wales.nhs.uk, or call NHS 111 Wales
- Make sure your child takes the full course of any antibiotics prescribed by the doctor
- Keep your child at home, away from nursery, school or work and follow any guidance provided by your GP on how long they should remain absent from these settings
- Find up-to-date information and advice on streptococcal A infections at 111.wales.nhs.uk.

I hope this letter reassures you that we will remain vigilant and notify you in the event that your child displays any symptoms during the school day. The information provided also enables you to familiarise yourself with the symptoms of scarlet fever and iGAS as a precaution.

Yours sincerely,

Osian Jones