

CHILDREN
WITH

scarlet fever



Children with scarlet fever

General information:

Scarlet fever is a skin rash, which appears in connection with an infection caused by specific bacteria - streptococcus. Scarlet fever is thus to be considered a part of a streptococcus infection – most often a throat infection – not an independent condition.

Scarlet fever is especially seen in children, and the characteristic symptoms are skin rash and “raspberry tongue” – a red, lumpy and slightly swollen tongue. The rash is caused by certain streptococcus bacteria producing substances called toxins, which cause the rash. The body produces antibodies against these toxins and you can therefore only contract scarlet fever once.

Usually the course of the illness is not serious and the illness will be over after a week. The rash disappears after 3-5 days, and after 5-7 days the skin begins to peel - similar to sunburnt skin – on the body and on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet.

How is it contracted?

Bacteria are present in the child's mucus and spittle and infection takes place by being in breathing in small droplets from coughing or sneezing and by physical contact with contaminated hand, toys or similar objects. The symptoms appear 2-4 days after infection has taken place, sometimes less.

Symptoms:

- Inflammation of the throat or a sore throat, pain when swallowing and fever
- “Raspberry tongue”. The tongue is red and lumpy
- A rash which often begins on the face, and which is bright red and in the form of small spots. The area around the mouth is usually rash-free. The rash then spreads to the rest of the body, arms and legs
- The skin feels rough like sandpaper.

Good advice:

- Change the child's toothbrush, because the old one can be contaminated with bacteria
- Offer the child plenty to drink – including hot drinks and soup
- Give your child soft food without hard crusts – offer to make some of the child's favourite dishes
- If necessary, give the child painkillers one hour before eating as they will reduce pain related to the swallowing
- If your child runs a fever, make sure it is not too warmly dressed or is not covered by a warm duvet
- Avoid smoking, because this irritates the child's airways.

When to see a doctor?

Contact a doctor if the child:

- has a sore throat, pain when swallowing and fever
- refuses to drink and does not pee
- makes you worry and you feel insecure.

Contact your general practitioner first because he/she knows your child better than the doctor on call. You can also get good advice and guidance from your health visitor.

Treatment:

There is no treatment for scarlet fever itself, but the throat infection will be treated with antibiotics. As the child probably finds it painful to swallow, you should ease the pain and any discomfort with ordinary painkillers as agreed with a doctor.

Prevention:

It is important for both children and adults to maintain good hand hygiene as this has been shown to reduce the risk of infection.

Childcare:

The child can return to childcare when the fever has disappeared and the child feels well again.



Parental guidelines

These guidelines have been prepared by a working group set up by the departments of paediatrics in Herning, Randers, Skejby and Viborg.

The intention with these guidelines is to provide parents with advice across the following sectors: health visitors, general practitioners family doctors, doctors on call, and the staff at paediatric admission wards in the Central Denmark Region.

The parental guidelines can be seen and downloaded from the internet on the web site www.fv.rm.dk

You may order additional copies from Rikke Dalsgaard,
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