

Scarlet Fever Fact Sheet

What is it ?

Scarlet fever is caused by a bacteria (germ) called, "Group A Streptococcus." This germ can hurt your skin and throat. Scarlet fever can make people very sick, and others not at all.

- Scarlet fever is most common in children 5 through 15 years old.
- It causes a pink-red rash.
- Many people carry these germs, but never become sick.



How does it spread ?

You can become infected with scarlet fever if you:

- Breathe in germs that contain the bacteria.
- Touch something with germs on it and then touch your face.
- Drink from the same glass or eat from the same plate as a person with scarlet fever.



How do I know if I have it ?

Usually, the first symptoms of scarlet fever are a fever and sore throat.

Signs that affect the tongue, throat, and neck include:

- White coating on the tongue early in the illness.
- Strawberry (red bumpy) tongue.
- Very red sore throat.
- Swollen glands in the neck.

Signs that affect the skin include:

- Red rash that feels rough like sandpaper.
- Bright red skin in the creases of the underarm, elbow, and groin.



How can I protect myself ?

There is no vaccine to prevent scarlet fever, but you can protect yourself and others when you:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Wash glasses, utensils, and plates after someone who is sick uses them.
- If someone in your home develops scarlet fever, talk to your doctor about what you can do to decrease your chances of getting sick.



How should I take care of myself or someone who has Scarlet Fever ?

If your child has scarlet fever, your doctor will prescribe antibiotics. These antibiotics can help your child feel better, not spread germs, and prevent long-term health problems.

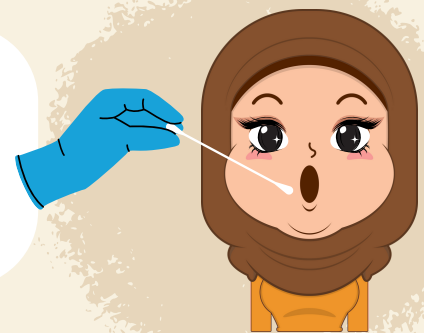
People with scarlet fever should stay home until they:

- No longer have a fever.
- Have taken antibiotics for at least 12 to 24 hours. You can ask your doctor how long to stay home.



When should I call a doctor ?

If you develop a sore throat with a fever, talk to your doctor. They will decide if you need to be seen, tested, or treated. Your doctor will swab your throat to test for strep throat because scarlet fever is caused by the same germ.



To learn more, visit the Scarlet Fever webpage at www.cdc.gov.

