



SCARLET FEVER

What is it?

- The rash is reaction to the toxins produced by bacteria when someone is suffering from an infection such as **strep throat** or possibly a skin infection. Not everyone is sensitive to the toxin so not everyone will develop the rash.

Who catches it?

- Anyone but particularly young children.

How serious is it?

- It used to be a serious disease but now tends to be milder.
- Incubation period approximately 3 to 8 days
- The child should see a doctor as antibiotics will be needed to treat the infection
- Often begins with a sore throat, a fever over 38.3deg C and swollen glands.
- The tonsils may have a white coating, or be red with small white or yellow pustules.
- The tongue may be coated white or yellow, later it may go red and peel.
- The rash begins like bad sun burn with tiny bumps, it may itch.
- It usually starts on the face and neck leaving a clear area around the mouth.
- It spreads to the chest and back, then to the rest of the body.
- In the body creases it forms red streaks.
- The rash usually fades about 6 days after the sore throat began.
- The affected skin may peel.
- Airway can become obstructed, will need urgent hospital treatment if the child develops breathing difficulties, cant swallow, drooling, can't open mouth or has severe joint pains with weakness.

Can it be prevented?

- Not really.
- Avoid sharing drinking glasses with an affected person.
- Wash your hands frequently when caring for an affected person.

When can the child return to school?

- Once antibiotics commenced the child can return to school 24 hours later or as directed by the doctor
- There are carriers who show no symptoms so it is difficult to control the spread of the bacterial infection by just excluding affected children.
- No evidence that it is a risk to pregnancy.