



The Adderley Post

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UPDATE FROM THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

Scarlet Fever and Group Strep A Infections

The Department of Education are working closely with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), who are leading on the response. UKHSA is reporting an increased number of cases of Group A streptococcus (Strep A) compared to normal at this time of year. There is no evidence that a new strain is circulating and the increase is most likely related to high amounts of circulating bacteria and social mixing.

What are scarlet fever and Strep A?

Scarlet fever is caused by bacteria called Group A streptococci (Strep A). The bacteria usually cause a mild infection that can be easily treated with antibiotics. In very rare occasions, the bacteria can get into the bloodstream and cause an illness called invasive Group A strep (iGAS).

What are the symptoms of Strep A/scarlet fever?

Strep A infections can cause a range of symptoms that parents should be aware of, including:

- Sore throat
- Headache
- Fever
- A fine, pinkish or red body rash with a sandpapery feel
- On darker skin the rash can be more difficult to detect visually, but will have a sandpapery feel

If your child becomes unwell with these symptoms, you should contact your GP practice or contact NHS 111 (which operates a 24/7 service) to seek advice.

If a child has scarlet fever, advise they stay at home until at least 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment to avoid spreading the infection to others.

Parents should trust their own judgement and if your child seems seriously unwell, call 999 or go to A&E if:

- your child is having difficulty breathing – you may notice grunting noises or their tummy sucking under their ribs
- there are pauses when your child breathes
- your child's skin, tongue or lips are blue
- your child is floppy and will not wake up or stay awake.

If there are confirmed or suspected cases in an education or childcare setting, there is no reason for children to be kept at home if they are well.

How to help prevent Strep A?

To prevent the spread of Strep A, UKHSA advises children, young people and staff to implement good hand and respiratory hygiene practices. For more information visit the [UKHSA website](https://www.ukhsa.gov.uk).

Keep Safe During the Holidays



The holidays are a fun time of year for most children, with the anticipation of seeing family and being out of school. It is also an important time of year to be mindful of your children's safety, such as:

- Be safe around water, teach your children not to go on to frozen lakes, ponds, canals and reservoirs under any circumstances
- Road Safety.
- Beware of local trains and train tracks.

Give children the freedom to play outdoors, but give them some rules such as:

- Remind your children about playing in safe areas, help children choose play areas with their home or a friend's home nearby.
- Children shouldn't play outside alone. Establish a buddy system with one or more friends and have them look out for one another. Children younger than 8 years of age should always be well supervised outside. Check every so often on older children who are playing outdoors for a long time.
- Check often to see that your child is safe.
- Please ensure that during the cold weather, your child is wearing the appropriate clothing.

Tips for Keeping Kids Safe Online



Set limits - Establish appropriate limits on the amount of time children may spend online and what kinds of sites they may visit.

Put the computer/Laptop/Tablet/Phone in a communal area—Putting the device in a central area, rather than in a child's bedroom, is a simple way to make sure you're aware of your child's online activities.

Explain that downloads can be dangerous - Free videos and games seem like a good deal, but they can have spyware and viruses. Similarly, warn children to not open email messages from people they don't know.

Keep personal information private - Discuss with children what kind of information is appropriate to share online, and what is not.

Teach caution of strangers- Online chatting should be primarily with friends and family. Remind children that people online might not be who they say they are. Children should never give private information, like a phone number or address, or send pictures to strangers.

Teach digital citizenship- The relative anonymity of the internet can make children (and grown-ups) say and do things they wouldn't do in real life. Telling lies or secrets and making cruel comments are all forms of cyber-bullying. Children should never say anything online that they wouldn't say to another person's face.

Keep the lines of communication open - Have an age-appropriate conversation about your family's values, and share why children should avoid content and conversations that you find objectionable. Make sure children know they can always come to you if something happens that makes them uncomfortable or hurts their feelings.