



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Scarlet fever is a childhood (usually ages 2 to 10) skin rash disorder caused by a streptococcal (strep) bacteria infection. It is very contagious.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Symptoms may vary in different children. The following is the usual course of the disease:

- Day 1
 - Fever as high as 104°F (40°C); a red sore throat, swollen tonsils (tonsils may have a whitish coating), enlarged lymph glands in the neck, cough, vomiting.
- Day 2
 - Bright red rash on the face, except around the mouth.
- Day 3
 - Reddened tongue ("strawberry tongue") and rash in body creases, which spreads to the neck, chest, back, and then the entire body. The rash looks like a sunburn with bumps.
- Day 6
 - The rash fades and skin may begin peeling, which can go on for 10 to 14 days.

CAUSES

- Streptococcal or strep infection caused by a type of germ that produces a scarlet fever toxin (poison). Germs are spread by contact with an infected person, breathing in germs in the air, or touching an object with germs on it.
- Very few strep infections lead to scarlet fever. Not everyone is susceptible to the toxin that produces the rash. In a family, one child may get scarlet fever, a second may have only a strep throat, and a third may carry the germ and spread it to others, but not be sick.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Strep infections that recur often.
- Living in a place with many other people such as a school dorm.
- Exposure to others in public places.
- Children ages 2 to 10.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Cannot be prevented completely, because some healthy persons will carry the strep germ without being ill. However, some ways to help prevent it include:
 - Antibiotic drug for 10 days for strep infection.
 - Avoid persons with sore throats.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

With treatment, it is usually cured in about 10 days.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Without treatment, infections that are more serious can occur.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam. Tests may include throat culture or blood test for strep bacteria. Testing may be done on other family members if they have symptoms.
- Treatment is with drugs. Care may be given at home.
- Keep the ill person away from other people, including family members. After the patient has taken the antibiotic drug for 24 hours, they are no longer contagious and can return to school or child-care. The rash is not contagious.
- Use a cool-mist, ultrasonic humidifier (if advised) to relieve the sore throat. Clean the humidifier daily.

MEDICATIONS

- Antibiotics will be prescribed. Be sure to take all the doses even if the symptoms improve.
- Use acetaminophen for pain relief and fever. Do not give aspirin to children under age 18.

ACTIVITY

Extra rest is a good idea until symptoms improve.

DIET

No special diet. Drink plenty of fluids.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or your child has symptoms of strep throat or scarlet fever.
- The following occur during treatment:
 - Fever goes away and then returns.
 - New symptoms begin, such as nausea; vomiting; earache; cough; headache; thick, colored, nasal drainage; chest pain; or difficulty breathing.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page