

Your ref:
Our ref: BM/DW
Date: 7th March 2018

Tîm Amddiffyn Iechyd

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Health Protection Team

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www.publichealthwales.org

To:
Pre-school nurseries
Primary and secondary schools
Local authority education departments (Health and Safety)

Dear colleagues,

Re: Increase in scarlet fever notifications 2018

We are writing to inform you of a recent increase in notifications of scarlet fever to Public Health Wales. There were 476 cases in the first 8 weeks of 2018, compared to 295 in the same period in 2017.

We are writing to schools and nurseries as this infection mostly affects children aged under 10 years, and outbreaks can occur in schools and nurseries. Older children are also susceptible to sore throats caused by the same infection, but may not have the rash of scarlet fever.

Signs and symptoms of scarlet fever

Scarlet fever, sometimes called scarlatina, is an infectious disease caused by a bacteria.

It is highly infectious and can be caught through direct contact with an infected person or through the air via droplets from coughs or sneezes.

The characteristic symptom of scarlet fever is a widespread, fine pink-red rash that feels like sandpaper to touch. Other symptoms include a high temperature, a flushed face and a red, swollen tongue.

Treatment is straightforward and usually involves a course of penicillin antibiotics.

Although scarlet fever is usually a mild illness, some people can develop complications so please take note of the following recommended actions.

Recommended actions

- Staff should be aware of the possibility of this infection in children who become ill with a fever, sore throat or rash
- Parents of unwell children should be advised to seek medical advice for diagnosis and treatment
- If you suspect an outbreak of scarlet fever at your school or nursery please contact the Health Protection Team on 0300 00 300 32 for advice
- Scarlet fever infection at the same time as **chickenpox or influenza** can be more serious so please contact the Health Protection Team as above for advice if these infections are also reported
- Advise **exclusion** from nursery / school / work for **24 hours** after starting antibiotic treatment
- Good hand hygiene and avoiding the spread of respiratory secretions (as per flu - "catch it, bin it, kill it") can help to prevent the spread of infection

Yours sincerely,



Dr Brendan Mason

Consultant in Communicable Disease Control

References:

NHS Direct Wales website information on scarlet fever

<https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/s/article/scarletfever>

Public Health Wales information on scarlet fever

<http://howis.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/63112>

Infection prevention and control for childcare settings and schools

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/75726>

Public Health England guidance on outbreaks of scarlet fever in schools and nurseries

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scarlet-fever-managing-outbreaks-in-schools-and-nurseries>