

# Scarlet Fever Fact Sheet

## **Scarlet fever is a rash illness caused by a bacterium called Group A *Streptococcus* (GAS)**

The disease most commonly occurs with GAS pharyngitis (“strep throat”) [See also Strep Throat fact sheet]. Scarlet fever can occur at any age, but it is most frequent among school-aged children.

### **Symptoms usually start 1 to 5 days after exposure and include:**

- Sandpaper-like rash, most often on the neck, chest, elbows, and on inner surfaces of the thighs
- High fever
- Sore throat
- Red tongue
- Tender and swollen neck glands
- Sometimes nausea and vomiting

### **Scarlet fever is usually spread from person to person by direct contact**

The strep bacterium is found in the nose and/or throat of persons with strep throat, and can be spread to the next person through the air with sneezing or coughing.

People with scarlet fever can spread the disease to others until 24 hours after treatment.

### **Treatment of scarlet fever is important**

Persons with scarlet fever can be treated with antibiotics. Treatment is important to prevent serious complications such as rheumatic fever and kidney disease. Infected children should be excluded from child care or school until 24 hours after starting treatment.

### **Scarlet fever and strep throat can be prevented**

- Cover the mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands after wiping or blowing nose, coughing, and sneezing.
- Wash hands before preparing food.
- See your doctor if you or your child have symptoms of scarlet fever.