

ALLEGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Office Administration

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Bioterrorism Preparedness

(269) 686-4570

Personal Health

(269) 673-5413



Communicable Disease

(269) 686-4551

Environmental Health

(269) 673-5415

Resource Recovery

(269) 673-5415

Scarlet Fever

(Group A Streptococcal Disease)

What is Scarlet Fever?

The same bacteria that cause strep throat can cause scarlet Fever. It is a form streptococcal disease characterized by a skin rash.

How is it spread?

It is spread from person to person mainly by direct contact with infectious droplets from the upper respiratory tract of infected persons and carriers.

What is the incubation period?

It takes 1-7 days after contact (average 2-5 days) for symptoms to appear.

What are the early signs?

Signs of scarlet fever include sudden onset of fever, usually with a sore throat, "strawberry" red tongue, and possibly vomiting and headache. A fine, pinkish-red, sandpaper-like rash often appears on the neck, chest, under arms, inner elbows, and groin area.

What about contacts?

Children who show signs of scarlet fever should be sent home and seen by a physician for proper diagnosis and treatment.

How long is the person contagious?

Scarlet fever is most contagious during the active infection, but is no longer contagious 24 hours after antibiotic treatment is started. (Untreated streptococcal disease may be contagious for several weeks.)

When is it OK to return to school?

Children should not return to school until at least 24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment, and until fever and other signs of illness are gone.

Other Important Information

- The most important way of controlling scarlet fever and its complications is prompt identification and treatment of infections.
- At the first sign of illness:
 1. Call your family doctor for instructions.
 2. Notify the school your child is ill

This fact sheet is not intended to replace the advice of your physician. Parents should contact their healthcare provider if they have concerns regarding their child's health. If you have general questions, you may contact an Allegan County nurse at 269-686-4551.