

Dear Parents and Carers,

You may be aware of news in the media regarding **Group A Streptococcus (GAS)** bacterial infections 'Strep A' among children. There is a higher number of these infections than is normally seen at this time of year. We are sending out this communication to provide further information on this national situation and guidance on the actions you can take to help reduce the spread of this infection.

Group A streptococcus is a bacterium that can be found in the throat and on the skin and survives for long enough to allow easy spread between people through sneezing and skin contact. People who are currently carrying the bacteria may have symptoms of illness or they may have no symptoms and feel fine. In both cases, these bacteria can be passed on to others.

What to look out for:

Most GAS illnesses are relatively mild, with symptoms including a sore throat ("strep throat"), scarlet fever or a skin infection, such as impetigo. The symptoms of scarlet fever include a sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting. This is followed by a fine red rash which typically first appears on the chest and stomach, rapidly spreading to other parts of the body. On more darkly-pigmented skin, the scarlet rash may be harder to spot, but it will still feel like 'sandpaper'. The face can be flushed red but pale around the mouth. Although scarlet fever is usually a mild illness, it should be treated with antibiotics to minimise the risk of complications and reduce the spread to others.

We urge all parents and carers to:

- remain vigilant to the signs and symptoms of GAS infection and any deterioration in your child's condition, seeking early medical help as necessary
- ensure that any child diagnosed with a GAS infection stays off school for the recommended period after starting antibiotics, that is, at least 24hrs after starting antibiotics for strep throat or 48hrs for impetigo, and is well enough to attend a school setting thereafter.
- remind children of the importance of good hand hygiene

The higher number of GAS infections is country-wide. **Nevertheless, it is important to know that instances of GAS are uncommon and most infections can be managed with antibiotics.**

Please be assured that we will continue to provide any further important updates to parents and carers as these become available.

Thank you for your continued support in this matter.

Your sincerely



Rachel Kitley
Principal