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SCARLET FEVER

What is scarlet fever?

Scarlet fever is a disease caused by a bacteria called group A streptococcus, the same bacteria that causes strep throat. Scarlet fever is a rash that sometimes occurs in people that have strep throat. The rash of scarlet fever is usually seen in children under the age of 18.

How do you get scarlet fever?

This illness can be caught from other people if you come in contact with the sick person because this germ is carried in the mouth and nasal fluids. If you touch your mouth, nose or eyes after touching something that has these fluids on them, you may become ill. Also, if you drink from the same glass or eat from the same plate as the sick person, you could also become ill. The best way to keep from getting sick is to wash your hands often and avoid sharing eating utensils.

What are the symptoms of scarlet fever?

The most common symptoms of scarlet fever are:

- ❑ A rash first appears as tiny red bumps on the chest and abdomen. This rash may then spread all over the body. It looks like a sunburn and feels like a rough piece of sandpaper. It is usually redder in the armpits and groin areas. The rash lasts about 2-5 days. After the rash is gone, often the skin on the tips of the fingers and toes begins to peel.
- ❑ The face is flushed with a pale area around the lips.
- ❑ The throat is very red and sore. It can have white or yellow patches.
- ❑ A fever of 101 degrees Fahrenheit (38.3 degrees Celsius) or higher is common. Chills are often seen with the fever.
- ❑ Glands in the neck are often swollen.
- ❑ A whitish coating can appear on the surface of the tongue. The tongue itself looks like a strawberry because the normal bumps on the tongue look bigger.

Other less common symptoms include:

- ❑ Nausea and vomiting
- ❑ Headache
- ❑ Body aches

How is scarlet fever diagnosed?

Your doctor or health care provider will examine your child and swab the back of the throat with a cotton swab to see if there is a streptococcus infection.

What is the treatment for scarlet fever?

If the swab test (throat culture) shows that there is streptococcus, you will be given an antibiotic prescription for your child. Give this medicine exactly as you are told. It is very important to finish all of the medicine. Never share any of this medicine with family or friends. Ask your doctor or health care provider about over-the-counter medicine to lessen sore throat pain.

Is there anything else I can do to make my child feel better?

Warm liquids like soup or cold foods like popsicles or milkshakes help to ease the pain of the sore throat. Offer these to your child often, especially when he/she has a fever, since the body needs a lot of fluid when it is sick with a fever. A cool mist humidifier will help to keep the air in your child's room moist, which will keep the throat from getting too dry and more sore. Rest is important.

What should I do if I think my child has scarlet fever?

The best thing to do if you think your child may be ill is to call your doctor or health care provider.