

## Scarlet Fever Frequently Asked Questions

---

### What is scarlet fever?

Scarlet fever is caused by Group A streptococcus (GAS), a bacteria commonly found in the throat and on the skin. These bacteria also causes strep throat. Scarlet fever often appears as a rash and is accompanied by a high fever and a strawberry-like appearance of the tongue. The illness is most common among children aged 5 to 18 years, but adults can also become infected.

### How do people get scarlet fever?

Scarlet fever can be spread through contact with the droplets of an infected person's cough and sneeze. If you touch your eyes, nose or mouth after coming into contact with these fluids, you may be at risk for contracting scarlet fever.

### What are the symptoms of scarlet fever?

Symptoms of scarlet fever include:

- Very red, sore throat
- Fever of 38.3° C (101° F) or higher
- Red rash with a sandpaper-like feel, usually starting in the groin and armpits, then spreading to the torso, legs and arms
- Swollen glands in the neck
- Whitish coating on the surface of the tongue, giving it a strawberry-like appearance because the normal bumps on the tongue look bigger.
- Other less common symptoms include headache, nausea, vomiting and body aches.

Symptoms usually begin 1-4 days after exposure. Approximately 1-4 days after the illness starts, the rash will appear. The rash usually lasts for 2-7 days after which the skin may peel.

Complications from untreated scarlet fever are **rare** and can include rheumatic heart disease and kidney damage.

### What to do when you have symptoms of scarlet fever?

It is important for people to see a healthcare provider if they have symptoms of scarlet fever so they be properly diagnosed and offered antibiotics. People usually start feeling better quickly after starting antibiotics, but they should complete their full course of antibiotics to treat the infection.

### How to stop the spread of scarlet fever?

People with scarlet fever should stay home from daycare, school, work and social functions. They can return 24 hours after starting antibiotics, if they are feeling better. They can be infectious up to six days before symptoms start.

People who have scarlet fever should wash their hands often and avoid sharing utensils, linens, towels, or other personal items that could come into contact with bodily fluids. There is no vaccine to prevent scarlet fever or strep throat.