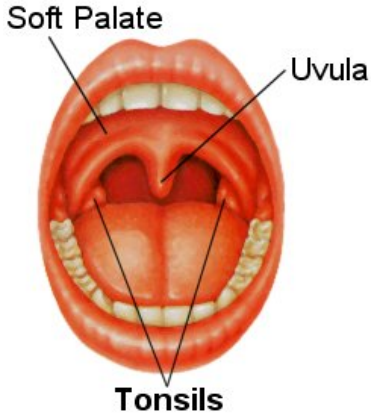
Scarlet Fever

Scarlet fever is an infectious disease caused by bacteria (*Streptococcus pyogenes*). It usually occurs in school age children. Scarlet fever is typically associated with "strep throat" (*streptococcal pharyngitis*). Scarlet fever rarely occurs from other streptococcal infections (*impetigo*). Scarlet fever seldom causes any problems in itself. All that has to be done is to treat the streptococcal infection with antibiotics.



SYMPTOMS

Scarlet fever causes a fine red rash on the face that typically is not present around the lips. A day later the rash may spread to cover the entire body. The rash may itch. During this time the temperature begins to fall and the tongue can become bright red. After about a week the skin may begin to peel. The peeling may last two weeks.

RISKS

The main risks of scarlet fever are:

- Rheumatic fever (a disease affecting the joints and heart).
- An inflammation of the kidney (*glomerulonephritis*).

Both of these illnesses have become quite rare over the past twenty years with the increased use of antibiotics and improved nutrition. Rheumatic fever results when the body's defense tries to get rid of the germ and ends up accidentally attacking the joints and heart. Rarely does a child progress to longstanding heart disease or kidney failure. All children should follow-up with their doctor to make sure none of these rare complications have occurred.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Your child should rest as much as possible and get plenty of sleep.
- Your child has been placed on antibiotics if they have been diagnosed with scarlet fever or a Streptococcus infection. Make sure you finish all of the antibiotics even if your child appears well and the temperature has returned to normal.
- Some older children may find gargling with 1 teaspoon of salt mixed in 8 ounces of water as soothing.
- Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids. While the throat is very sore, feed your child soft or liquid foods such as milk, milk shakes, ice cream, frozen yogurts, soups, or instant breakfast milk drinks. Cold sport drinks and smoothies are good choices for hydrating. Young children may like to suck on frozen juice bars or popsicles.
- Family members who develop a sore throat or fever should see a physician.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver. **Do not take or give aspirin**.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- An oral temperature above 102º F (38.9 º C) develops and lasts for 2 days or longer, not controlled by medicine.
- Your child coughs up green, yellow-brown, or bloody phlegm.
- You were instructed to call for culture results if taken.
- Your child develops joint pain, leg swelling or high blood pressure.
- Your child appears dehydrated (pale, dry mouth, not urinating, weak, sunken eyes, breathing fast or other findings that you may think are associated with dehydration).

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your child starts drooling or cannot swallow.
- Your child has trouble breathing.
- Your child has a voice change.

- Your child develops severe neck pain.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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