

How Long Is a Child Contagious With Scarlet Fever?

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Scarlet Fever, A Variant of Strep

1. Scarlet fever, also known as scarlatina, is a particular strain of the bacteria that causes strep throat. The combination of the strep infection and the toxins produced by the particular strain cause severe skin rashes, sore throat, a flushed face, a red tongue and, in some cases, a throat with inflammation and yellow and white patching. Untreated, the infection can be fatal. The primary tool in preventing the spread of the disease is antibiotic treatment.

Why Antibiotics Rather Than Natural Recovery?

2. Human beings can recover from scarlet fever naturally. However along with the very high risks of letting the disease go untreated, the contagious period can last long after the symptoms of the disease are passed. While the body has brought the infection under control the bacteria remain to be spread. The primary transference of the bacteria is through air by coughs and sneezes. However traces of saliva left on dishes and glasses, or hands that are poorly washed, or similar methods of passing bacteria can also serve to spread the disease. Antibiotic treatment, rather than simply gaining control of the infection, does kill off the colonies far more quickly, ending the contagious period sooner.

How Long With Antibiotic Treatment?

3. The standard rule of thumb is 24 hours after antibiotic treatment is begun. Even then there may be surviving bacteria in the room and on the possessions of the patient. This places not only the rest of the [family](#) at risk but the patient as well, as there is no lasting immunity from strep infections. During illness, any contact with the patient should be followed with hand washing with soap or alcohol disinfectant. Surfaces should be wiped with a mild solution of bleach and water. Bedding and clothing should be washed in hot water and soap and dried in the dryer on a hot setting. After the illness has passed [toys](#) should be washed or discarded, and the room should be well cleaned with disinfectant solution. Strep infections, including scarlet fever, are persistent and dangerous. Take precautions and don't trust the antibiotic to cover all bases.