**Keeping Our Children Safe**

I’m sure you have seen in the news the reported increase in scarlet fever and invasive Group A Strep infections. I hope the information below is helpful.

The latest data from UKHSA shows that scarlet fever cases continue to remain higher than we would typically see at this time of year. Scarlet fever is usually a mild illness but is highly infectious. Look out for symptoms in children which include a sore throat, headache, and fever along with a fine, pinkish, or red body rash with a sandpapery feel.

Contact NHS 111 or your GP if you suspect your child has scarlet fever. Early treatment with antibiotics is important to reduce the risk of complications such as pneumonia or a bloodstream infection.

If a child has scarlet fever, they should stay at home until at least 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment to avoid spreading the infection to others.

Scarlet fever is caused by bacteria called Group A streptococci. These bacteria also cause other respiratory and skin infections such as strep throat and impetigo.

In very rare occasions, the bacteria can get into the bloodstream and cause an illness called invasive Group A Strep. Whilst still uncommon, there has been an increase in invasive Group A Strep cases this year, particularly in children under 10.

Our Advice

There are lots of viruses that cause sore throats, colds, and coughs. These should resolve without medical intervention. However, children on occasion develop a bacterial infection on top of a virus and that can make them more unwell.

As a parent/carer, if you feel that your child seems seriously unwell, you should trust your own judgement. Contact NHS 111 if/or your GP if:

-Your child is getting worse

-your child is feeding or eating much less than normal

-your child has a dry nappy for 12 hours or more or shows other signs of dehydration

-your baby is under 3 months and has a temperature of 38C or is older than 3 months and has a temperature of 39C or higher

- your child is very tired or irritable

Call 999 or go to A&E if:

-Your child is having difficulty breathing – you may notice grunting noises or their tummy sucking under their ribs

-There are pauses when your child breathes

-Your child’s skin, tongue or lips are blue

-Your child is floppy and will not wake up or stay awake

Good hand and respiratory hygiene are important for stopping the spread of many bugs. By teaching your child how to wash their hands properly with soap for 20 seconds, using a tissue to catch coughs and sneezes and keeping away from others when feeling unwell, they will be able to reduce the risk of picking up or spreading infections.