Scarlet fever

What is scarlet fever?

Scarlet fever is caused by the bacteria streptococcus type A. The disease is transmitted via droplet infection (coughing and sneezing). The incubation time is 2 – 4 days. Most affected patients are toddlers.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms usually have a sudden onset with high temperature, sore throat, chills, headache, muscle pain and some time vomiting. After the onset of fever a rash develops, mainly on the thorax, neck and axilla. Most of the time the area around the mouth remains free of a rash and the most affected area are the inguinal regions. Around 14 days after the onset of the rash the skin starts to pale. The tongue can also be affected. It first the tongue looks white. When the white rash starts to disappear the surface of the tongue looks like the surface of a strawberry. “Strawberry tongue”.

What are the complications?

An inflammation of the heart and kidneys can develop. Pain and swelling of the ankles can also develop. The symptoms are strong if not treated. Early treatment with antibiotics can decrease the risk of complications.

What is the therapy?

The infection is treated with Penicillin or Amoxicillien for 10 to 14 days. It is important to know that in some rare cases heart, kidney and ankle infection can occur despite treatment. In that case a longer treatment is necessary.

Isolation and pregnancy?
All children need to stay at home till complete recovery. Patients are contagious from one day before the start of the disease till one week after the eruption of the disease. There is no evidence that an infection during pregnancy can harm the unborn fetus. Pregnant women can be treated very well with antibiotics. Despite that pregnant women should avoid any contact with a child who has scarlet fever.