



**衛生防護中心**  
Centre for Health Protection

**Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases  
Scientific Committee on Advanced Data Analysis and  
Diseases Modelling**

**Statement on Scarlet Fever**

- The rise of scarlet fever (SF) cases in Hong Kong is likely a regional phenomenon.
- The overall epidemiologic and clinical characteristics of SF cases in this outbreak resemble those in the past, although infrequently some cases may have atypical clinical presentation.
- The case fatality rate so far is not significantly higher than historical or international figures.
- A number of different Group A Streptococcus (GAS) strains causing SF are circulating in the community.
- The underlying reasons for the SF upsurge are being further investigated, including a new genetic fragment inserted in the bacterial genome, clone shuffling effects and others.
- The contribution of new GAS clone(s) with altered genetic characteristics causing this outbreak remains to be further investigated.
- For patients with suspected SF, the penicillin group of antibiotics is the treatment of choice and should be given for at least 10 days.



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- Judicious use of antibiotics is important in preventing the development of bacterial resistance. Microbiological testing by antigen testing and culture should be considered to guide antimicrobial therapy. Patients with only runny nose without fever should not be considered for antimicrobial therapy unless the clinical condition changes or the microbiological test is positive for GAS.
- High SF activity will probably persist for a period of time into the summer. The situation needs to be closely monitored to guide public health measures.
- The Committee recommends:
  - studies be done to characterize the role and prevalence of new genetic changes and to project the outlook of the outbreak over time
  - continued intensive surveillance for SF and invasive GAS infections including acute rheumatic fever and glomerulonephritis
  - strengthening publicity and education on the appropriate use of antibiotics
  - close communications with healthcare professionals on the progression of the outbreak and information pertaining to clinical diagnosis and management of SF patients

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This statement represents a consensus view of members of the Scientific Committees reached in the light of scientific information accessible and examined at the time of its release.

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