

STREP THROAT

What is strep throat? Strep is a highly contagious sore throat caused by streptococcus bacteria (streptococcus pyogenes, also known as group A streptococcus). Strep is transmitted through air-borne respiratory droplets released when coughing or sneezing, and also through shared eating utensils. Although it can be diagnosed at any time of year, strep is most common among children in the late fall and early spring. Left untreated strep throat can lead to rheumatic fever, a rare but serious complication that can cause inflammation of the heart and joints. Strep throat is not uncommon, but it is important to realize that most sore throats are not due to strep bacteria, but to other causes such as viruses, allergens, other kinds of bacteria, environmental irritants such as cigarette smoke, and post-nasal drip.

What are the symptoms of strep throat? Strep symptoms include sudden-onset sore throat, painful swallowing, headache, fever, swollen and tender neck glands and/or rash. Symptoms can include nausea and vomiting, especially in younger children. Symptoms do *not* typically include cough, runny nose, hoarseness and conjunctivitis (pink eye).

What should you do if you think your child has strep throat? If you think your child has strep, contact your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider will do a rapid strep test which involves swabbing the throat. If that result is inconclusive your healthcare provider will do a throat culture. The results of the throat culture will take a day or two.

What is the treatment for strep throat? If strep is diagnosed, your child will be put on antibiotics. Your child will feel better within a day or two of starting antibiotic treatment, but should continue to take the medication for the full duration of time that it is prescribed. Before returning to school your child will need to be on the medication and without a fever for a full 24 hours.

What you can do to prevent the spread of Strep Throat:

- Anyone with a sore throat should wash their hands often and cover their mouth when coughing and sneezing.
- Encourage your child to wash his/her hands before eating and do not allow the sharing of food or eating utensils.
- Wash dishes carefully in hot, soapy water and/or the dishwasher.
- If your child is diagnosed with strep, throw away his/her old toothbrush after he/she has been on antibiotics for 24 hours.