

# STREP THROAT

## (Streptococcal Sore Throat)

Information From Your Health Care Provider



### BASIC INFORMATION

#### DESCRIPTION

Strep throat is a streptococcal bacterial infection of the throat (the pharynx). It can spread from person to person and is most common in children over age 2. The infection can be present in someone with no symptoms, but who can still spread the germs (carrier state).

#### FREQUENT SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Rapid onset of throat pain.
- Throat pain that is worse when you swallow.
- Headache, fever, general ill feeling.
- Children may have nausea and vomiting.
- Tender, swollen glands in the neck.
- Bright-red tonsils that may have spots of pus.

#### CAUSES

Group A streptococcus (GAS) bacteria. Germs are spread by contact with an infected person, breathing in germs in the air, or touching an object with germs on it. A person usually has symptoms within 2 to 5 days of exposure. Strep throat is one of the most common types of infection caused by group A streptococcus. It can also cause skin infections and other health problems.

#### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Recent strep infection in a family member.
- Crowded living conditions such as a dorm.
- Being in a daycare center or attending school.

#### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- There are no specific preventive measures.
- Avoid close contact with anyone with strep throat.
- Avoid germs. Wash hands often, especially children.

#### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

A strep throat infection will normally clear up in 3 to 7 days. Antibiotic therapy will shorten the time you can spread the germs to others (be contagious). Antibiotics also reduce the risk of complications and the risk of spreading the infection to other parts of your body. Without antibiotics, a person may be contagious for 2 to 3 weeks after symptoms are gone. Any complications are rare.

#### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Ear infection.
- Sinusitis.
- Rheumatic fever or scarlet fever.
- Glomerulonephritis (kidney disorder).



### DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

#### GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will examine the throat. A sore throat (pharyngitis) can also be caused by virus infection, allergies, or other problems. Further tests are usually needed. A throat culture or rapid strep test can confirm a strep infection.
- Treatment for strep infection is with antibiotic drugs.
- To relieve the sore throat, gargle frequently with warm or cold double-strength tea or warm salt water (mix one-half teaspoon of salt in one cup of water).

#### MEDICATIONS

- Penicillin, amoxicillin, or another antibiotic is usually prescribed. Be sure to take the full course of the drug even if the symptoms are better.
- Use a nonprescription pain drug, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen, if needed. Don't give aspirin to children under age 18.
- Throat lozenges or anesthetic sprays for sore throats are available and may help with pain relief.

#### ACTIVITY

Get extra rest. Return to normal activities as symptoms improve. A person can no longer spread the germs if they have taken the antibiotic drug for at least 24 hours.

#### DIET

A liquid diet may be helpful while the throat is sore. Drink plenty of fluids, including milk shakes, soups, tea, carbonated drinks, or iced coffee. Any type and amount of solid food is fine as long as you can swallow it without too much pain.



### NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of strep throat.
- The following occur during treatment:
  - Fever recurs after being normal for a few days.
  - New symptoms appear, such as nausea, vomiting, earache, cough, swollen glands, skin rash, severe headache, nasal drainage, or shortness of breath.
  - Joints become red or painful.

Special notes:

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