

Strep Throat

What is Strep throat?

Strep throat is an infection by bacteria called streptococcus pyogenes, a group A streptococcus. Symptoms include severe sore throat, fever, and red, inflamed throat. White or red patches, pus, or swollen tonsils can sometimes be seen in the throat.

Who gets Strep throat?

Strep throat is most common in school age children and teens, but can also occur in adults and preschool children. It is very contagious. The bacteria, which is present in the nose and throat, is spread from sneezing, coughing, or talking. Strep can also be spread by handling objects touched by an infected person, such as books and toys. Hand washing is essential to prevent the spread of infection.

When should I see my Doctor?

Most sore throats are caused by a virus, and will resolve on their own, but a sore throat accompanied by other symptoms should be evaluated by your doctor. Your doctor will do a rapid strep test in the office. This is done by taking a swab of your throat, and the test can be completed in just a few minutes. A positive test means that you have strep throat. There is a chance of false negative results with the rapid strep test, so your doctor will usually send a swab to a laboratory as well for a more detailed testing. This will provide results in 24-48 hours.

Treatment for Strep Throat

Your doctor will prescribe an antibiotic to treat your strep throat infection. Be sure to tell your doctor about any allergies or reaction to antibiotics in the past, and any other medications your child may be taking. Most antibiotics are to be given for 10 days. It is very important that the antibiotic be given for the entire prescribed time, or the infection could come back. It is important to drink plenty of fluids, especially if a fever has been present. Strep throat can be very painful. Pain can be treated with over the counter acetaminophen (Tylenol), or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil). Throat lozenges or gargling with warm salty water may also provide benefit. Always check with the doctor if you are unsure of the dose of pain medications, and never give aspirin to a child.

How can I prevent spreading Strep Throat?

Your child should stay home from school or daycare until the antibiotic has been given for at least 24 hours. Be sure to replace or sterilize items such as toothbrushes, retainers, pacifiers, etc. Washing bedding is also recommended. Your family should not share toothbrushes, glasses or silverware, or other potentially infectious items.