



Fact Sheet: Strep Throat

What is Strep Throat?

Strep throat is an infection of the upper airway. It is caused by group A Streptococcus bacteria and is more common in children than in adults. If not treated with the right medicine, the infection can lead to serious complications such as: scarlet fever; rheumatic fever; skin, bloodstream, and ear infections; and pneumonia. It usually takes 1-3 days for symptoms to develop after being exposed to the bacteria.

What are the symptoms?

- Severe sore throat
- Fever
- Headache
- Swollen glands in the neck

How is it spread?

The bacteria are easily spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes droplets into the air and another person inhales them. Persons can also catch the bacteria if they touch infected secretions and then touch their mouth or nose. After a few hours of antibiotic therapy infected persons can no longer spread the bacteria to other people.

How is it treated?

- Call your doctor if you think your child has been exposed to strep throat or has strep throat.
- Call the daycare center or school that your child attends so they can observe the other children for symptoms of sore throat and fever.
- If antibiotics are prescribed, have your child take all of the medicine as directed, even if they feel better.
- Rest.
- Apply cold or warm compresses to the neck for relief.
- Encourage cool liquids or ice chips.
- Children should be on antibiotic treatment for at least 24 hours before returning to school.

How is it prevented?

- Use tissues to catch coughs and sneezes and throw used tissues in the trash.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after touching any nasal or oral secretions.
- Teach your children to wash their hands with soap and water after they cough or sneeze.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water before preparing food or eating.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, call your health care provider.

Visit our website at: www.gchd.us or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: www.cdc.gov

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