

# Strep Throat

## What is Strep Throat?

Strep throat is an infection caused by bacteria (germ) called Group A Streptococcus. Strep throat is more common in children than adults.

## What are signs and symptoms of Strep Throat?

Children with strep throat usually have a very sore throat, headache, swollen and tender neck nodes, and a fever. They may also complain of headache, nausea or a sore stomach.

## How does Strep Throat spread?

Group A streptococci are spread by direct, indirect or droplet contact with secretions from the nose and throat of infected persons. Direct contact can occur when someone comes into contact with saliva (spit), nose or sore on the skin. Indirect contact occurs when germs in the nose and throat of an infected person spread through the air – as droplets from coughs or sneezes.

## How is Strep Throat diagnosed?

It is impossible for doctors to diagnose strep throat just by looking at your child's throat. Your doctor will have to take a throat swab. That means collecting a bit of fluid from the back and sides of the infected person's throat, using a long cotton swab. The fluid is then tested for the streptococcus germ.

## How is Strep Throat treated?

Although the illness usually gets better without treatment, it is possible that those who are infected can have complications if they are not treated. Children get better faster when treated with an antibiotic. If strep throat is diagnosed, your doctor will prescribe an antibiotic.

## What can parents do?

If you think your child might have strep throat, see your doctor. If your child has strep throat:

- Washing your hands and your child's hands (with soap and water for at least 15 seconds) is the best thing that you can do to stop the spread of germs.
- Teach your child to cover his/her mouth with a tissue or with his sleeve or elbow when coughing or sneezing.
- If your child has fever, give acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and fluids.
- Gargling with warm salt water can help soothe a sore throat.
- Keep your child home from child care or school until she has taken the antibiotic for at least one full day.
- Your child should take all the medication prescribed by the doctor, even if the signs of illness have gone away.

Source: Canadian Paediatric Society. (2008). Strep throat and scarlet fever. *Caring for Kids, When your kid is sick*. Retrieved from: <http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts>

*This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a health care professional about any health concerns.*

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