



## **Health Fact Sheet: Strep Throat**

### **What is Strep Throat?**

Strep throat is a bacterial throat infection caused by group A streptococcus bacteria, and is very common among children and teenagers.

### **What are the symptoms of Strep Throat?**

The most common symptoms of a streptococcus throat infection or strep throat are;

- Throat pain that usually comes on quickly
- Painful swallowing
- Red and swollen tonsils, sometimes with white patches or streaks of pus
- Tiny red spots on the area at the back of the roof of the mouth (soft or hard palate)
- Swollen, tender lymph nodes in your neck
- Fever
- Headache
- Rash
- Nausea or vomiting, especially in younger children
- Body aches

It's possible for you or your child to have many of these signs and symptoms but not have strep throat. The cause of these signs and symptoms could be a viral infection or some other illness. That's why your doctor generally tests specifically for strep throat.

It's also possible for you to be exposed to a person who carries strep but shows no symptoms.

### **How Does Strep Throat Spread?**

Group A streptococcus throat infections are spread in a similar way to colds and flu, so normal activities like sneezing, coughing, or shaking hands can easily spread the streptococcus infection from one person to another.

### **How is Strep Throat diagnosed?**

Not all sore throats are strep throats. Most episodes of sore throat - which can be accompanied by a runny nose, cough, hoarseness, and red eyes - are caused by viruses. Sore throats usually clear up without requiring medical treatment. A suspected case of strep throat can be confirmed by the doctor by taking a swab of affected tissue or saliva.



### **What is the treatment for Strep Throat?**

The child's doctor should be consulted. Antibiotics are prescribed for most cases of streptococcus throat infection. It is important that even when feeling better, your child should finish the antibiotics as prescribed. If antibiotics are stopped too soon the bacteria can remain in the throat and symptoms can return.

The following tips may help to relieve symptoms:

- Be sure your child gets plenty of liquids to prevent dehydration.
- Bland soups and special teas designed for sore throats can help soothe the throat as well.
- Gargle several times a day with warm salt water (1/2 tsp of salt in 1 cup water).
- Suck on hard candies or throat lozenges. Young children should not be given these products because they can choke on them.
- A cool-mist vaporizer or humidifier can moisten and soothe a dry and painful throat.
- Ibuprofen can help reduce the pain and inflammation of strep throat in children, as well as reducing the fever.

### **Are there any complications of Strep Throat?**

Lack of treatment or not finishing antibiotics can put a child at risk of developing other health problems such as rheumatic fever, scarlet fever, blood infections and damage to the kidneys.

### **Can Strep throat be prevented?**

There is no vaccine or treatment that prevents this infection. Frequent hand washing reduces the transmission. Make sure your child covers his or her mouth and nose during a sneeze or cough. To prevent the spread of infection in your home, keep eating and drinking utensils separate and wash in hot soapy water after use. Make sure that your child does not share food, drinks, towels etc.

### **Should I keep my child home from school?**

Children with Strep Throat should be excluded from school and other children's settings until appropriate treatment commenced and when they have fully recovered.