
Strep Throat

What You Need to Know



What is strep throat?

Strep throat is an infection in the throat and tonsils caused by a bacteria called group A *Streptococcus* or group A strep. Anyone can get strep throat, but it is most common in school-age children between 5 and 15 years old.

What are the symptoms of strep throat?

- Sore throat that may start very quickly
- Pain when swallowing
- Fever
- Red and swollen tonsils, sometimes with white patches or streaks of pus
- Tiny red spots on the back or roof of mouth
- Swollen lymph nodes on the neck

Other symptoms may include headache, nausea, vomiting, or stomach pain. Symptoms usually begin 2-5 days after being exposed to group A strep.

How is strep throat spread?

Group A strep bacteria are spread through contact with droplets from an infected person's sneeze or cough. It is sometimes spread by drinking from the same glass or eating from the same plate as a sick person. It is also possible to get strep throat from touching sores from group A strep skin infections. People can get strep throat more than once.

How is strep throat diagnosed?

Healthcare providers can test for strep throat by swabbing the throat and testing for group A strep bacteria. Since a sore throat can be caused by many kinds of viruses and bacteria, it is very important to determine if group A strep is the cause.

What is the treatment for strep throat?

Unlike sore throats caused by viruses, strep throat is treated with antibiotics. Antibiotics help shorten how long someone is sick, prevent the spread of disease to others, and prevent getting complications like rheumatic fever or abscesses of the throat.

How long is a person contagious?

People with strep throat should stay home from work, school, or daycare until they have taken antibiotics for at least 24 hours so they don't spread the infection.

How is strep throat prevented?

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands, if you don't have a tissue.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not available.
- Do not share eating utensils with someone who is sick with strep throat.
- Wash glasses, utensils and plates after someone who is sick uses them.



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