

# Strep Throat Infection

## What is strep throat?

Strep throat is an inflamed (red and swollen) throat caused by infection with bacteria called Streptococci. It is diagnosed with a throat culture or a rapid strep test at the health care provider's office.

With treatment the fever and much of the sore throat are usually gone within 24 hours. It is important to treat strep throat to prevent some rare but serious complications such as rheumatic fever (a disease that affects the heart) or glomerulonephritis (a disease that affects the kidneys).

## How can I take care of my child?

- **Antibiotics** Your child MUST be seen in the office with confirmation of a positive strep test in order for the provider to give a prescription.
- **Fever and pain relief** Children over age 1 can sip warm chicken broth or apple juice. Children over age 4 can suck on hard candy (butterscotch seems to be a soothing flavor) or lollipops. Give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for throat pain or fever over 102°F (38.9°C). Chloroseptic spray > 2yrs of age is also helpful. Salt water gargles with warm water 2-3x/day.
- **Diet** Swollen tonsils can make some foods hard to swallow. Provide your child with a diet of soft foods for a few days if he prefers it.
- **Contagiousness** Your child is no longer contagious after he has taken the antibiotic for 24 hours. Therefore, your child can return to school after one day if he is feeling better and the fever is gone.
- **Sterilize or throw away anything that goes into your child's mouth for the first 24hrs (toothbrushes, binkies, sippy cups)** to prevent reinfection
- **Throat cultures for the family** Strep throat can spread to others in the family. Any child or adult who lives in your home and has a fever, sore throat, runny nose, headache, vomiting, or sores; doesn't want to eat; or develops these symptoms in the next 5 days should be brought in for a throat culture. All siblings MUST be seen in the office and confirmed as positive before a prescription will be given.
- **Recurrent strep throat and repeat cultures** Usually repeat throat cultures are not necessary if your child takes all of the antibiotic. However, about 10% of children with strep throat don't respond to initial antibiotic treatment. Therefore, if your child continues to have a sore throat or mild fever after treatment is completed, return for a second throat culture. If it is positive, your child will be retreated with a different antibiotic.

## When should I call my child's health care provider?

Call IMMEDIATELY if:

- Your child starts drooling or has great trouble swallowing.
- Your child is acting very sick.

Call during office hours if:

- The fever lasts over 48 hours after your child starts taking an antibiotic.
- You have other questions or concerns.

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