



STREPTOCOCCAL PHARYNGITIS (“Strep Throat”)

What is “Strep Throat”?

Strep throat is a type of sore throat that can occur when a person is infected by the highly contagious Group A Streptococcal (GAS) bacteria. It is characterized by a red, sore throat, often with white patches on the tonsils; swollen lymph glands in the neck, fever, rash and headache may also occur. Nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain are more common in children. Strep throat is most often seen in children aged 5-15. After 12 years of age, fewer cases are seen.

When should a person seek medical attention for a “sore” throat?

Call your doctor if you or your child has a sore throat without a cold or runny nose; a sore throat accompanied by tender, swollen lymph glands; a sore throat lasting longer than 48hrs; a fever higher than 103 F in older children or any fever lasting longer than 48hours; rash, severe headache; joint pain or problems breathing or difficulty swallowing anything, including saliva. It is possible to have many of these signs and symptoms but not have strep throat. The cause of these signs and symptoms could be a virus so your doctor may test specifically for strep throat. If untreated, strep throat can sometimes cause complications like tonsillitis, sinusitis, ear infections, scarlet fever (strep throat with a rash) or rheumatic fever.

Who is most at risk for Strep throat?

Children between ages 5 and 15 are most commonly at risk. The infection often circulates in late fall, winter and early spring. Strep throat peaks in the fall and spring, while viruses peak in the winter. Strep bacteria flourish when groups of people are in close contact. That is why it quickly spreads among family members, in schools and in child-care settings.

What is the treatment for Strep throat?

Because Strep throat is caused by a bacterium and not a virus, it is easily treated with antibiotics such as penicillin. It is **VERY** important for all persons diagnosed with Strep throat to take **the entire prescribed antibiotic**. This will kill the Strep bacteria and prevent the small risk of complications seen with Strep throat infections.

How is GAS bacteria spread?

Streptococcal bacteria are spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes directly on someone else. Children may also pick up the bacteria from a toy, doorknob or other surface and transfer them to their noses or mouths. Kitchen utensils and bathroom objects are other common sources of transmission.

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How long is a person able to spread Strep GAS bacteria?

An untreated person with an uncomplicated case can spread bacteria for as long as 2-3 weeks. With adequate antibiotic therapy, however, the treated person is usually only contagious for 24 to 48 hours. For this reason, persons diagnosed with “strep throat” should rest quietly at home from work, school, or childcare, until antibiotic has been taken for at least 24 hours.

What can be done to help prevent streptococcal infections?

The spread of all types of GAS infection may be reduced by good hand washing. Hands should be washed particularly carefully after coughing, sneezing, wiping a runny nose, and before preparing foods or eating. Covering the mouth and nose when sneezing and coughing also prevents person-to-person spread of disease.

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