

STREP THROAT FACT SHEET

What is strep throat?

Strep throat is an infection in the throat and tonsils caused by bacteria called group A *Streptococcus* or group A strep. Group A strep bacteria are commonly found in the nose and throat of people without illness.

Who can get strep throat?

Anyone. However, it is more common in children than adults, particularly children 5–15 years old. Parents of school-aged children and adults who are often in contact with children will have a higher risk for strep throat than adults who are not around children very often. People can get strep throat more than once.

What are the symptoms of strep throat?

The symptoms of strep throat usually include the following:

- Sore throat that can start very quickly and can cause severe pain when swallowing
- Fever
- Red and swollen tonsils, sometimes with white patches or streaks of pus
- Tiny red spots on the roof of the mouth
- Swollen lymph nodes in the front of the neck

Other symptoms may include headache, nausea, vomiting, or stomach pain.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually begin 2–5 days after being exposed to group A strep.

How is strep throat spread?

The bacteria travel in small droplets of water called respiratory droplets that are created when someone who is infected coughs or sneezes. You can get sick if you breathe in those droplets or if you touch something that has the droplets on it and then touch your mouth or nose. You could also become ill if you drink from the same glass or eat from the same plate as a sick person. It is possible to get strep throat from touching sores on the skin caused by group A strep (impetigo).

How is strep throat diagnosed?

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

How is strep throat treated?

If diagnosed with strep throat, you may be prescribed antibiotics by your health care provider. It is important to take the full course of the antibiotics as prescribed even when one starts feeling better. Not finishing the full course of the medication can result in a longer infection or more serious complications.

How can people protect themselves against strep throat?

The following steps can prevent the spread of strep throat:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, scrubbing your hands for at least 20 seconds
- Avoid sharing eating utensils (forks, cups, etc.) with someone who is sick with strep throat
- When you cough or sneeze cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or your upper sleeve or elbow (not your hands) if you don't have a tissue

Should a person with strep throat be excused from school/daycare?

A child with strep throat should stay home until 24 hours after treatment has started and they no longer have fever. A doctor's note stating that they are under treatment should be submitted upon their return.

Where can I get more information?

Information about strep throat and other related health topics can be found at www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please visit www.dchealth.dc.gov or call (202) 442-442-9371.

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