

Strep throat

What is strep throat?

Strep throat is an infection caused by a bacteria (germ) called Group A Streptococcus. It is more common in children than adults.

What are the symptoms?

Not all sore throats are strep throat. Children with strep throat usually have:

- a very sore throat,
- trouble swallowing,
- swollen and tender neck nodes, and
- fever.

Your child may also complain of headache, nausea or a sore stomach.

Children with strep throat do not usually have cold symptoms (cough and runny nose).

How do children get strep throat?

Direct contact: When someone comes into contact with an infected person's saliva (spit), nose or sore on the skin.

Indirect contact: When germs in the nose and throat of an infected person spread through the air—as droplets from a cough or sneeze.

How is it diagnosed?

Your doctor cannot diagnose strep throat just by looking at your child's throat. He will have to take a throat swab. That means collecting a bit of fluid from the back and sides of your child's throat, using a long cotton swab. The fluid is then tested for the strep bacteria.

How is it treated?

Although strep throat usually gets better without treatment, some children can get complications if they are not treated. Children get better faster when treated with an antibiotic. Your doctor will decide if an antibiotic is needed.

What can parents do?

If you think your child might have strep throat, see your doctor.

If your child has strep throat:

- Washing your hands and your child's hands is the best thing that you can do to stop the spread of germs.
- Teach your child to cover their mouth with a tissue or with their sleeve or elbow when coughing or sneezing.
- If your child has fever, give acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
 - Ibuprofen should only be given if your child is drinking reasonably well.
 - Do not give ibuprofen to babies under 6 months without first talking to your doctor.
 - Do not alternate between using acetaminophen and ibuprofen as this can lead to dosing errors.
 - A child or teenager with a fever should not be given aspirin [acetylsalicylic acid (ASA)].
- Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and fluids.
- Gargling with warm salt water can help soothe a sore throat.
- Keep your child home from child care or school until they have taken the antibiotic for at least one full day.

- Your child should take all the medication prescribed by the doctor, even if the signs of illness have gone away.

Reviewed by the following CPS committees

- Public Education Advisory Committee

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