

Strep Throat

Description

Infection of the throat (the pharynx) by group A *streptococcus* (GAS) bacteria. Strep throat can spread from person to person and is most common in children. Infection can be present in someone with no symptoms, but who can still spread the germs (carrier state).

Frequent Signs and Symptoms

- Rapid onset of throat pain. Throat pain that is worse when you swallow. Bright-red tonsils that may have specks of pus.
- Headache, fever, general ill feeling. May have nausea and vomiting.
- Tender, swollen glands in the neck.

Causes

Streptococcal bacteria. Germs are spread by contact with an infected person, breathing in germs in the air, or touching an object with germs on it. A person usually has symptoms in 2 to 5 days of exposure. Strep throat is one of the most common types of infection caused by group A *streptococcus*. It can also cause skin infections and other health problems.

Risk increases with

- Recent strep infection in a family member.
- Crowded living conditions such as a dorm.

Preventive measures

- Avoid close contact with anyone with strep throat.
- Avoid germs. Wash hands often.

Expected outcomes

- Curable with treatment. Symptoms are usually better in the first few days of treatment. Complications are rare.

Possible complications

- Ear infection. Sinusitis.
- Rheumatic fever or scarlet fever.
- Glomerulonephritis (a kidney disorder).

General measures

- Your health care provider will examine the throat. A sore throat can also be caused by virus infection, allergies, or other problems. A throat culture or rapid strep test can confirm a strep infection.
- To help relieve the pain, gargle often with warm salt water (1 teaspoon of salt to 8 oz. of water).

Medications

- Penicillin or another antibiotic will be prescribed. Finish the complete 10-day dose, even if symptoms get better. This helps prevent any complications or recurrence of the infection.
- Use over-the-counter pain medicine, such as ibuprofen, if needed. Throat lozenges for sore throats are available from drugstores and may help with pain relief.

Activity

- Return to normal activities as symptoms improve. A person can no longer spread the germs if they have taken the antibiotic drug for at least 24 hours.

DIET

- A liquid diet may be helpful while the throat is sore. Drink plenty of fluids, including milk shakes, soups, tea, carbonated drinks, and iced coffee. Any type and amount of solid food is fine as long as you can swallow it without too much pain.

Notify our office if

- Fever recurs after being normal for a few days.
- New symptoms appear, such as nausea, vomiting, earache, cough, swollen glands, skin rash, severe headache, or shortness of breath.

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