

# Strep Throat Fact Sheet



What is strep throat?

Strep throat is an infection caused by bacteria. It is called “strep” because the bacterium that causes the infection is streptococcus.

How do you get strep throat?

The infection is spread person to person. It is spread through direct contact with mucus from the nose or throat of an infected person. It is also spread through the air by sneezing or coughing.

What are the symptoms of strep throat?

Symptoms start one to five days after exposure and include:

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Tender and swollen neck glands

Sometimes people with strep can develop a red rash all over the body that feels like sandpaper. When this happens, the illness is called scarlet fever. Strep throat is NOT generally associated with cough, congestion or nasal drainage.

People can also have the strep bacterium in their throats but never feel sick.

How is strep throat treated?

Strep throat can be treated with antibiotics. The antibiotics will kill the bacteria which helps strep throat go away a little faster. It can also prevent a few rare but serious conditions that people with strep throat might get. It is important to take all of the medicine your doctor gives you even if you start to feel better.

Should all sore throats be treated with antibiotics?

No. Not every sore throat is strep throat. Bacteria only cause about 5% to 10% of sore throats. The rest are caused by viruses or other problems, and antibiotics will not help.

What can I do to make a sore throat feel better?

- Take ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, Nuprin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). Children and teens should **not** take aspirin.
- Gargle with warm salt water (1/4 teaspoon of salt in eight ounces of warm water).
- Adults and older children can suck on throat lozenges, hard candy or pieces of ice.
- Eat soft foods, drink cool drinks or warm liquids, or suck on Popsicles.

Do I need to keep my child home from school?

Yes. Children with strep throat should not go back to school or daycare until their fever is gone, and they have taken an antibiotic for at least 24 hours.

How can strep throat be prevented?

- Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash your hands after wiping or blowing your nose, coughing and sneezing.
- Wash your hands before making food.

## Strep Throat Fact Sheet – page 2

---

- Taking antibiotics to prevent you from getting strep throat is not indicated.

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for talking with a health care provider. If you have any questions about strep throat or think you may have it, call your health care provider.*