

What is strep throat?

Strep throat is an inflamed (red and swollen) throat caused by infection with bacteria called *Streptococci*. It is diagnosed with a throat culture or a rapid strep test at the healthcare provider's office.

With treatment the fever and much of the sore throat are usually gone within 24 hours. It is important to treat strep throat to prevent some rare but serious complications such as rheumatic fever (a disease that affects the heart) or glomerulonephritis (a disease that affects the kidneys).

How can I take care of my child?

- **Antibiotics**

Your child's antibiotic is _____. Your child's dose is _____, given _____ times a day during waking hours for 10 days.

Try not to forget any of the doses. If the medicine is a liquid, store the antibiotic in the refrigerator and use a measuring spoon to be sure that you give the right amount. Your child should take the medicine until all the pills are gone or the bottle is empty. Even though your child will feel better in a few days, give the antibiotic for 10 days to keep the strep throat from flaring up again.

A long-acting penicillin (Bicillin) injection can be given if your child will not take oral medicines or if it will be impossible for you to give the medicine regularly. (Note: If given correctly, the oral antibiotic works just as rapidly and effectively as a shot.)

- **Fever and pain relief**

Children over age 1 can sip warm chicken broth or apple juice. Children over age 4 can suck on hard candy (butterscotch seems to be a soothing flavor) or lollipops. Give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for throat pain or fever over 102°F (38.9°C).

If the air in your home is dry, use a humidifier.

- **Diet**

A sore throat can make some foods hard to swallow. Provide your child with a diet of soft foods for a few days if he prefers it. Make sure your child drinks plenty of liquid to keep the throat moist.

- **Contagiousness**

Your child is no longer contagious after he has taken the antibiotic for 24 hours. Therefore, your child can return to school after one day if he is feeling better and the fever is gone. Hand washing is the best way to prevent strep throat.

- **Throat cultures for the family**

Strep throat can spread to others in the family. Any child or adult who lives in your home and has a fever, sore throat, runny nose, headache, vomiting, or sores; doesn't want to eat; or develops these symptoms in the next 5 days should be brought in for a throat

culture. In most homes only the people who are sick need throat cultures. (In families where relatives have had rheumatic fever or frequent strep infections, everyone should have a throat culture.) Your provider will call you if any of the cultures are positive for strep.

- **Recurrent strep throat and repeat cultures**

Usually repeat throat cultures are not necessary if your child takes all of the antibiotic. However, about 10% of children with strep throat don't respond to initial antibiotic treatment. Therefore, if your child continues to have a sore throat or mild fever after treatment is completed, return for a second throat culture. If it is positive, your child will be given a different antibiotic.

When should I call my child's healthcare provider?

Call IMMEDIATELY if:

- Your child starts drooling or has great trouble swallowing.
- Your child is acting very sick.

Call during office hours if:

- The fever lasts over 48 hours after your child starts taking an antibiotic.
- You have other questions or concerns.
- Return to clinic in 1 week for a follow up visit and to check eradication of the infection