

## Strep Throat (Bacterial)

When a sore throat comes on fast, it may be caused by the bacteria *streptococci*. Strep throat is most common in school-age children 5-15, but anyone can get it. It is rare in children under 2.

- Strep throat can be spread to others. It is contagious.
  - o Strep germs hang out in the nose and throat. When the infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, the germs go into the air. They are then breathed in by others.
  - o The germs can also land on things and be picked up by touching them.
- Strep is easy to treat.
  - o Untreated strep can be harmful. If the body overreacts to the bacteria, it can lead to a disease called rheumatic fever. Rheumatic fever can cause painful and swollen joints, a specific type of body rash, kidney damage, or damage to the heart.
  - o Start antibiotic medicine as soon as possible to prevent harm to the body.

### + Symptoms

Someone with sore throat may have the following symptoms:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| - Red, sore throat                                  | - Swollen, tender neck glands   |
| - Fever   | - Trouble swallowing  |
| - White spots on back of throat, tonsils, or tongue | - In some cases poor appetite, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea   |
| - Tiny red spots on the roof of mouth               | - In younger children who may not be able to articulate what they are feeling, you may notice they are more fussy or irritable. |
| - Red, sandpaper-like rash on body (scarlet fever)  |   |
| - Headache  |   |

### + Diagnosis

The provider will examine you or your child, ask about signs and symptoms, and then test for strep.

- There are 2 tests we use to test for strep at the SmartMED facility. Both use the same soft cotton swab. The provider will brush the swab over the back of the throat. This may cause coughing or gagging, this is normal and should not be painful.
- All tests at SmartMED are run in house. We offer:
  - o Rapid antigen testing: This test runs for approximately 15 minutes and you will receive your results the same day.
    - This test is most accurate 2-3 days after symptom onset.
  - o PCR testing: This test runs for approximately 15 minutes and you will receive your results the same day.
    - This test is recommended if symptom onset is within 24 hours.
    - This test confirms a negative result.
- A positive rapid test or PCR test means that you have strep throat.

**Please note:** If a strep PCR is run, a rapid test will not be run also, as the results are received within the same time frame. You do not have to wait on site for your results for either test, we will call you when they are complete.

## + Treatment & Antibiotics

- If you have a positive strep test, antibiotic medicine will be started right away.
  - Please throw away you or your child's toothbrush and wash sheets 48 hours after beginning antibiotics.*
- Tell your provider if you or your child are allergic to any medications, so that they can be sure to send the correct antibiotic.
- All medication must be taken as prescribed without stopping, even if you or your child begin to feel better. Stopping too early, taking too much, or missing doses can cause antibiotic resistance.
- Antibiotics may have side effects including diarrhea or stomach upset.

## + How to Care For Yourself At Home

There are things you can do at home to help you feel better.

- Drink lots of fluids. Water, Gatorade, Pedialyte, and popsicles are good options.
- Eat soft foods that are easy to swallow, like applesauce, eggs, or mashed potatoes.

- To soothe the sore throat, you can do:
  - o For anyone age 6 and older: Mix ½ teaspoon of table salt in 8 ounces of warm water. Swish and gargle the mixture 2 to 3 times a day for the next few days.
  - o For anyone age 4 and over, throat lozenges may be introduced under supervision.
  - o For anyone age 3 and older there are over the counter chloraseptic throat sprays that may provide some relief.
  - o For anyone age 1 and older, warm fluids like water, herbal tea with honey, or apple juice. Do not give honey to children under 1.
- For fever, acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin) can be taken as directed. Read the label to find appropriate dosing.

### + How to Protect Others

- You or your child are contagious for 24 hours after beginning antibiotics or if you have a fever.
- Children may return to school and day care after being on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Practicing good handwashing is important. Wash hands for 15-20 seconds with soap and water.
- Cover mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Do not share utensils, cups, or straws.

### + When to Call Your Provider

Call your provider if antibiotics have been started and any of the following occur:

- Develop a rash or severe diarrhea.
- Sore throat lasting more than 3 days.
- Dehydration
  - o Signs of dehydration:
    - No urination
      - Hard or fast breathing
      - Dry or sticky mouth
      - Sunken-looking eyes
    - Very dark urine
    - No tears when crying
    - Child (4 months and older) has less than 3 wet diapers a day or

pees less than 3 times  
a day

- Have a fever.

Older than 3 months of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 104° F (40° C) or above</li> <li>- Above 102 degree F (38.9° C) for more than 2 days or it keeps coming back</li> <li>- Tried treating fever but it has not worked</li> </ul>
<b>Any age – call with a fever and:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unusual rash</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Showing signs of dehydration</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stiff neck, bad headache, painful stomachache</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Has any immune conditions that make you more likely to be sick</li> </ul>

## + Helpful Links

[About Strep Throat | Group A Strep | CDC](#)

[Strep Throat in Kids | Children's Healthcare of Atlanta](#)