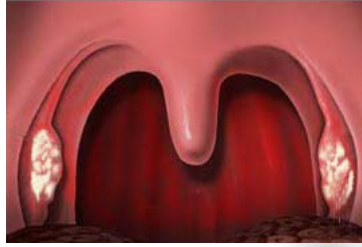


Strep Throat



Strep throat is a bacterial infection that can make your throat feel sore and scratchy. Most sore throats are caused by viruses and usually go away on their own. Only a small portion of sore throats are actually strep throat.

It's important to identify strep throat from sore throats caused by viruses because if left untreated, it can cause complications such as kidney inflammation and rheumatic fever.

Strep throat is most common between the ages of 5 and 15, but it does affect people of all ages.

Symptoms of strep throat may include:

- **throat pain,**
- **difficulty swallowing,**
- **red/swollen tonsils**
- **tiny red spots at the back of the roof of your mouth along with**
- **fever and headache.**

It is possible for you to have many of these symptoms but not have strep throat. It is possible your symptoms are caused by a virus. It is also possible to have the bacteria that can cause strep throat but not be sick. In this case you could still pass it on to others.

We call it strep throat because it is caused by the organism *Streptococcus*. This bacterium is contagious. It can spread through droplets in the air when someone with the infection coughs or sneezes. You can also pick up the bacteria from a doorknob, telephone, TV remote control, kitchen counters or other surfaces and transfer them to your own nose or mouth.

Although strep throat can occur anytime of the year, it tends to circulate in the winter and spring. Strep bacteria flourish wherever groups of people are in close contact. That's why the infection spreads easily among family members, in schools and in child care settings.



If you suspect you have strep throat, it is best to start by seeing your doctor. He will ask a number of questions about when your symptoms first started and how they have progressed up until now. The doctor usually can diagnose the cause of a sore throat by review of your symptoms and looking into your throat and a few lab tests.

If your sore throat is caused by the strep bacterium your doctor will likely prescribe an antibiotic such as penicillin. It can be either by injection if you are having trouble swallowing or orally. Antibiotics will reduce the duration and severity of the symptoms, reduce the risk of complications and the likelihood that the infection will spread to family and/or friends. Be sure to finish the entire course of medicine. Stopping medication early may lead to recurrences and complications. Pain relievers such as Tylenol and Motrin will relieve the pain and reduce any fever.

In most cases antibiotics will quickly wipe out the bacteria causing the infection. Other suggestions include:

- get plenty of rest
- drink plenty of water
- eat soothing foods (applesauce, mashed potatoes, yogurt)
- gargle with warm salt water
- use a humidifier
- stay away from irritants like cigarette smoke and fumes from paint

To prevent the spread of the infection always:

- clean your hands often. Use soap and water or sanitize with alcohol-based spray/gel
- cover your mouth when coughing/sneezing and then clean your hands
- avoid sharing personal items like drinking glasses or eating utensils.

~ National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health/CDC