

Let's Talk About...

Strep Throat

What is strep throat?

Strep throat is a throat infection. Strep is short for Streptococcus [strep-tow-KOK-cuss], which is the name of the bacteria (germs) that cause the infection. Strep throat is very contagious and anyone can get it, but it is more common in children and teens.

What are the symptoms of strep?

The main symptom of strep throat is a sore throat. The sore throat often starts quickly. Pain can range from mild discomfort to very painful, especially when swallowing. Other symptoms may include:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- Sore, swollen lymph nodes (glands) in the neck
- Swollen tonsils
- Red and white patches in the mouth or throat
- Headache
- Stomachache

How is strep diagnosed?

Tests are needed to check for the presence of strep bacteria. A doctor or healthcare provider will rub cotton swabs against the back of the throat. The swab samples are then tested.

With a rapid strep test, results will come back while you wait at the office or clinic. In some cases, a sample is sent to a lab for testing. Results for this test, called a throat culture, will take 1 to 2 days.



How is strep treated?

Strep is treated with antibiotics, usually penicillin or amoxicillin. When taking antibiotics, remember to:

- **Take the antibiotic for the full length of time — typically 10 days.** Your child will begin to feel better quickly, but they should continue the medicine until it's gone.
- **Take the antibiotic as directed.** Carefully follow dosing instructions. Contact your healthcare provider or pharmacy if you have questions.
- **Take only the prescribed antibiotic.** Taking the wrong antibiotics or taking them when they are not needed can be harmful.

Doing these things will prevent your child from getting another infection or having complications.

If the strep is not properly treated, your child could have more serious problems like rheumatic [roo-MAT-ik] fever. Rheumatic fever causes a person's joints, heart valves, kidneys, or other tissues to swell. Fortunately, these problems are very rare.

How can I care for my child at home?

Encourage your child to drink liquids often, even if they do not want to eat. Offer cold drinks, ice pops, or tea with honey. Avoid acidic juices (such as orange juice) and spicy foods until their throat feels better.

If your child is old enough, give acetaminophen (Tylenol) for aches, pains, or fever. Remember, always use over-the-counter medicine as directed. Do not give aspirin (salicylate) to children younger than 16 years. Aspirin can increase their risk of getting Reye's syndrome, which causes brain and liver damage.

When can my child go back to school or daycare?

Your child can return to school or daycare 24 hours after starting antibiotics and if they have a normal temperature (less than 99°F or 37.2°C).

How can I help my child prevent sore throats?

To help prevent sore throats:

- Always practice good handwashing.
- Avoid contact with people who have colds or other lung infections.
- Avoid exposing children to smoking and second-hand smoke.

Sore throats are commonly caused by cold or flu viruses as well as by allergies, dry air, pollution, or smoking and second-hand smoke. These types of sore throats should not be treated with antibiotics. Antibiotics only treat bacterial infections and will not work on viruses or allergies. Most sore throats go away on their own after 2 to 4 days.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your doctor or get emergency care if your child has any of the following problems:

Get emergency care if your child:

- Has trouble breathing or swallowing
- Has lips that look blue
- Drools all the time

Call the doctor if your child:

- Has a fever greater than 104°F (40°C)
- Isn't drinking liquids
- Shows signs of dehydration:
 - Dark-colored urine (pee)
 - Urinating less often than normal
 - Dry mouth
- Seems very weak or fatigued
- Has trouble opening their mouth
- Develops an earache
- Has very tender, swollen, or red neck glands
- Doesn't seem to be getting better after 5 days of starting antibiotics

Where can I learn more?

Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Scan the QR code with your smartphone's camera to learn more.



Intermountain Healthcare complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. Se proveen servicios de interpretación gratis. Hable con un empleado para solicitarlo. 我們將根據您的需求提供免費的口譯服務。請找尋工作人員協助。