

FACT SHEET: STREP THROAT (STREPTOCOCCAL PHARYNGITIS)

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WHAT IS STREP THROAT?

Strep throat is an infection in the throat and tonsils caused by bacteria called *Streptococcus pyogenes* (group A strep bacteria). Group A strep bacteria are commonly found in the nose and throat of people without illness.

WHO CAN GET STREP THROAT?

Strep throat can affect anyone, but it is more common in children, particularly those between the ages of 5 and 15. Parents of school-aged children and adults who frequently interact with children have a higher risk of contracting strep throat compared to those who are not often around kids. It is important to note that people can experience strep throat more than once.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF STREP THROAT?

The symptoms of strep throat usually include the following:

- Sore throat can start very quickly and can cause severe pain when swallowing
- Red and swollen tonsils, sometimes with white patches or streaks of pus
- Tiny red spots on the roof of the mouth
- Swollen lymph nodes in the front of the neck

Other symptoms may include headache, nausea, vomiting, or stomach pain.

HOW SOON DO SYMPTOMS APPEAR?

Symptoms usually begin 2 to 5 days after being exposed to group A strep.

HOW IS STREP THROAT SPREAD?

Strep throat mainly spreads when an infected person talks, coughs, or sneezes, and droplets dispersed in the air land in the mouth or are breathed in by people nearby. It also spreads by touching your eyes, mouth, or nose after touching surfaces or objects contaminated with strep throat.

Additionally, sharing a glass or eating from the same plate as someone who is sick can lead to illness.

HOW IS STREP THROAT DIAGNOSTED?

Healthcare providers can diagnose strep throat by swabbing the throat and testing for group A strep bacteria. Since a sore throat can result from various viruses and bacteria, it is crucial to identify whether group A strep is the cause.

HOW IS STREP THROAT TREATED?

If you are diagnosed with strep throat, your healthcare provider may prescribe antibiotics. It's essential to complete the entire course of antibiotics as directed, even if you start feeling better before finishing the medication. Not completing the full course can lead to a longer infection or more serious complications (e.g., ear infections, sinusitis, kidney disease, pneumonia, and rheumatic fever).

HOW CAN PEOPLE PROTECT THEMSELVES AGAINST STREP THROAT?

The following steps can prevent the spread of strep throat:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, scrubbing your hands for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as toys, doorknobs, tables, and counters

SHOULD A PERSON WITH STREP THROAT BE EXCLUDED FROM SCHOOL OR DAYCARE?

A child with strep throat should remain home for 24 hours after starting treatment and until they are fever-free. A doctor's note confirming their treatment must be submitted upon their return.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

Information about strep throat and other related health topics can be found at the website [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov). The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please visit dchealth.dc.gov or call (202) 442-5865.