

STREPTOCOCCAL INFECTION

Information for School-Aged Children

Streptococcal sore throat (strep throat) and scarlet fever (a strep throat with a rash) are common infections in young children.

CAUSE: *Streptococcus* bacteria (Group A beta-hemolytic strep).

SYMPTOMS: **Strep Throat:** Sudden onset of fever, red sore throat, and swollen glands. Headache may occur. Nausea, stomach pain, and vomiting may be more common in children.

Scarlet fever: A very fine raised rash (feels like sandpaper) is present. The rash blanches with pressure. The rash appears most often on the neck, chest, in folds of the armpit, elbow, groin, and in the inner thigh. Later on, there may be peeling of the skin on the fingertips and toes.

These illnesses are usually not serious; however, rare problems such as rheumatic fever (which can damage heart valves) or kidney disease may develop if children do not receive proper antibiotic treatment.

SPREAD: When a person with Group A strep infection coughs or sneezes tiny droplets with Group A strep bacteria into the air and another person breathes them in. People can also get infected by touching these secretions and then touching their mouth or nose. Casual contact rarely results in spread.

INCUBATION: It usually takes 2 to 5 days from the time a person is exposed until symptoms begin.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD: Until 24 hours after antibiotic treatment begins.

EXCLUSION: Until 24 hours after antibiotic treatment begins and until the child is without fever.

Children without symptoms, regardless of a positive throat culture, do not need to be excluded from school. Carriers of strep appear to be at little risk of spreading infection to those who live or work around them.

DIAGNOSIS: Call your healthcare provider. They may confirm the presence of strep in the throat, either by throat culture or by using a rapid strep test, which can provide results the same day.

TREATMENT: If the throat culture or rapid strep test is positive, a penicillin shot or antibiotics taken by mouth (oral) are prescribed. Antibiotics should be taken for the prescribed amount of time. DO NOT stop taking the antibiotic even when the person is feeling better. Treatment may depend on how severe the infection is and will help prevent more serious illness such as rheumatic fever.

PREVENTION/CONTROL:

1. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with secretions from the nose or mouth. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.**

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PREVENTION/CONTROL CONTINUED:

2. Cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing or cough/sneeze into your sleeve.
3. Dispose of used tissues.
4. If your child develops a sore throat and other symptoms listed above, keep the child home and call your healthcare provider.

For more information, you or your healthcare provider may call Hennepin County Community Health Department at (952) 351-5230, or call your local health department.