



Strep Throat

(Streptococcal Pharyngitis)

What is strep throat?

Strep throat is an infection caused by group A *Streptococcus*, a group of bacteria. These bacteria, commonly called “strep,” can cause a variety of diseases such as strep throat and impetigo, which is a type of skin infection. Rarely, group A strep can also cause more severe illnesses such as kidney infections, scarlet fever, heart valve infections, deep skin and muscle infections, and rheumatic fever.

Who is at risk for strep throat?

Anyone can be at risk for strep throat, although it is most common among school-aged children and adolescents.

What are the symptoms of strep throat?

Symptoms of strep throat may include sudden onset of fever, sore throat, pain when swallowing, red and swollen tonsils (sometimes with white patches or streaks of pus), tiny red spots on the roof of the mouth, and swollen lymph nodes in the front of the neck.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms of strep throat usually occur one to five days after being infected.

How is strep throat spread?

Strep throat is spread through large respiratory droplets (e.g., coughing, sneezing) or direct contact with people who are ill. It is unlikely to be spread by touching surfaces or objects. Rarely, strep throat can be spread through improper food handling.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

If treated, the ability to spread group A strep bacteria to others usually ends about 12 hours after starting an antibiotic. If left untreated, people can spread the illness for weeks.

How is a person diagnosed?

A specimen is collected by swabbing the back of the throat. Tests may include a rapid strep test or growing the bacteria in culture.

What is the treatment?

Penicillin, amoxicillin, or other antibiotics can be used to treat strep throat. Antibiotic treatment can shorten the duration of symptoms, prevent complications, and reduce the likelihood of transmission to close contacts.

Does past infection make a person immune?

No. Recurrent strep throat infections are common.

Should children or others be excluded from child care, school, work or other activities if they have strep throat?

People with strep throat should stay home until they no longer have a fever and have been taking an antibiotic for at least 12 hours.

What can be done to prevent the spread of streptococcal bacteria?

The best way to avoid getting sick or spreading group A strep to others is to wash your hands often with soap and clean, running water. If diagnosed with strep throat, a person should stay home from work, school, or child care until they no longer have a fever and have taken an antibiotic for at least 12 hours. Always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.

Additional Information:

Additional information is available at www.ndhealth.gov/disease or by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

Resources:

Red Book: 2018 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases. 31st ed. [Children in Out-of-Home Child Care]. Kimberlin, DW; Brady, MT; Jackson, MA; Long, SS. American Academy of Pediatrics. 2018: 122-136.

Red Book: 2018 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases. 31st ed. [Group A Streptococcal Infections]. Kimberlin, DW; Brady, MT; Jackson, MA; Long, SS. American Academy of Pediatrics. 2018: 748-762.

Heymann, D. L. (2015). *Control of Communicable Diseases Manual, 20th Edition*. Streptococcal Diseases. American Public Health Association. 2015: 581-592.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). Group A Streptococcal (GAS) Disease. www.cdc.gov/groupastrep/index.html.