

Streptococcal Pharyngitis (Strep Throat)

What is strep throat?

- Strep throat is an infection in the throat and tonsils caused by bacteria called group A streptococcus (group A strep).
- It is most common in children 5 through 15 years of age. It is rare in children younger than 3 years old.
- It is most common during the school year, with peaks in winter and early spring.

How does it spread?

- Group A strep bacteria are very contagious. Generally, individuals spread the bacteria to others through:
 - Respiratory droplets
 - Direct contact
- It usually takes 2-5 days from someone exposed to group A strep bacteria to become ill with strep throat.

Signs and Symptoms

- Fever
- Pain when swallowing
- Red and swollen tonsils
- White patches or streaks of pus on tonsils
- Tiny red spots on the roof of the mouth
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Headache
- Stomach pain or nausea/vomiting
- Rash

Diagnosis

- If you suspect your child has strep throat, contact our office. Your child will likely require an office visit for testing.
- Reading Pediatrics uses ID NOW machines, which provide molecular results in 6 minutes or less. The enhanced molecular sensitivity of these machines eliminates the need for a throat culture to be sent to the lab.

When can they return to school?

Individuals with strep throat should stay home for school, work, or daycare until they:

- Fever free for 24 hours, and
- Have taken antibiotics for at least 24 hours.

Treatment

- Treatment for strep throat is antibiotics. Individuals with strep throat usually start feeling better 1-2 days after starting antibiotics.
 - If your child is given antibiotics, it is very important that they take it for the full course, as prescribed - even if symptoms get better or go away.
 - The infection may worsen or spread to other parts of the body if not treated or improperly treated. This can lead to conditions such as abscesses of the tonsils or kidney problems. Although rare, untreated strep can also lead to rheumatic fever, a disease that affects the heart.
- In addition to antibiotics, supportive care interventions can be helpful. These include:
 - Tylenol/Motrin as needed for fever or discomfort.
 - Oral rehydration fluids (i.e., Pedialyte, Enfalyte) to prevent dehydration.
 - Warm foods, such as soups, tea, or hot chocolate can be soothing.
 - Frozen treats, such as smoothies, popsicles, or ice cream can also be soothing.
 - Avoid orange juice, grapefruit juice, lemonade, or other acidic beverages, which can irritate a sore throat.

How can I protect my child?

- Throw away toothbrushes after 48 hours of antibiotic treatment.
- Don't share cups or utensils.
- Good hand hygiene can help protect you and your child from getting or spreading the infection. Children should be instructed to wash their hands frequently for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Place tissues in the waste basket.

