
Scarlet Fever/Streptococcal Sore Throat “Strep”

Description: “Strep” throat is a bacterial infection which is confirmed by a laboratory test of discharge from the throat. Not every sore throat is strep. Scarlet fever is a combination of strep throat and a skin rash, but it is no more serious than strep throat without a rash. Rheumatic fever (affecting the valves of the heart); however, is a serious complication which can be prevented by prompt appropriate treatment of strep throat.

Symptoms: Symptoms of strept throat include fever, sore throat, and oozing and redness of the tonsils and throat.

Symptoms of scarlet fever include the same symptoms with a sandpaper-like rash.

How it is Spread: Strep throat is spread by inhaling respiratory droplets from an ill person. Spread is usually by direct contact with nose and throat secretions from an infected person. Rarely, it may be spread indirectly by contact with hands or objects (such as drinking cups or eating utensils) contaminated with nose or mouth discharges of an infected person.

Incubation Period: Usually 1-3 days.

How Long Can a Person Pass the Infection to Others? The infection can be passed for about 24 hours after adequate treatment begins.

Responsibilities of Parents and Caregivers:

- Routine screening of all children and employees of the child care facility is not recommended, unless evidence of an ongoing epidemic is apparent as determined by the local health department or unless strep kidney disease has occurred.
- Ask parents to notify the caregiver about their child’s infection. They should not transfer the child to another child care facility.

Control of Spread:

- Send home a child who has symptoms. The child should be taken to a doctor. If strep throat is diagnosed, the child may return 24 hours after antibiotics have been started.
- Avoid excluding a child who does not have symptoms, even though she may have a positive throat culture.
- Good personal hygiene practices should be followed. Cover the nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing. Dispose of soiled tissues after wiping a runny nose. Always follow with proper hand washing. Do not share eating utensils, food or drinking cups. Sanitize toys mouthed by infants and toddlers.
- Notify other parents so they can observe their children for signs of infection.
- Observe other children for symptoms of infection.

Treatment:

- Penicillin or other effective antibiotics as prescribed by a doctor.
- To prevent potential complications such as rheumatic fever, antibiotics should be completed as prescribed.