

STREP (streptococcal) THROAT

TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

7.8

DESCRIPTION

Infection of the throat (the pharynx) by group A streptococcus (GAS) bacteria. Strep throat can spread from person to person and is most common in children. Infection can be present in someone with no symptoms but who can still spread the germs.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Rapid onset of throat pain
- Throat pain that is worse when swallowing
- Appetite loss
- Headache, fever, general ill feeling
- Ear pain when swallowing (sometimes)
- Tender, swollen glands in the neck
- Bright-red tonsils that may have specks of pus

CAUSES

Streptococcal bacteria. It is spread by person-to-person contact via drops of saliva, nasal secretions, or coughing. It can also cause skin infections and other health problems.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Contact with someone with a strep infection
- Smoking
- Fatigue
- Crowded living conditions

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Avoid contact with infected people
- Avoid second-hand smoke
- Wash hands often

EXPECTED OUTCOME

Curable with treatment. Symptoms are usually better within the first few days of treatment. Any complications are rare.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Ear infection
- Sinusitis
- Rheumatic fever or scarlet fever
- Glomerulonephritis (a kidney disorder).

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your medical provider will examine the throat. A sore throat (pharyngitis) can also be caused by a virus infection, allergies, or other problems. A throat culture or rapid strep test can confirm a strep infection.
- Treatment for strep infection is with antibiotic drugs.
- To relieve the sore throat, gargle frequently with warm salt water (mix one-half teaspoon of salt in one cup of water).

MEDICATION

- Penicillin or another antibiotic will be prescribed.
- Finish the complete prescription, even if symptoms subside (helps prevent any complications or recurrence).
- Non-prescription pain medicine, such as acetaminophen, throat lozenges, or anesthetic throat sprays, may be used if needed.

ACTIVITY

Return to normal activities as symptoms improve. A person can no longer spread the germs if they have taken the antibiotic drug for at least 24 hours.

DIET

Increase fluids. Any type and amount of solid food is acceptable as long as it can be swallowed without too much pain.

NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF...

- Temperature is normal for 1 or 2 days, then fever develops.
- New symptoms appear, such as nausea, vomiting, earache, cough, swollen glands, skin rash, severe headache, nasal drainage or shortness of breath.
- Joints become red or painful.

Student Health Center



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This information is for educational purposes only. Consult your doctor for specific medical advice, diagnosis and treatment.

618-453-3311

Dial-A-Nurse is available after-hours until 10:30 p.m. during fall and spring semesters. In case of emergency dial 911.