

STREPTOCOCCAL INFECTION

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

CAUSE

Streptococcus bacteria (Group A beta-hemolytic strep)

SYMPTOMS

Strep throat:

Starts suddenly with fever, red sore throat, and swollen glands. Headache may occur. Nausea, abdominal 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 armpits, elbow, groin, and in the inner thigh. Later on, there may be peeling of the skin on the fingertips and toes. Although the cheeks might have a flushed appearance, there may be a pale area around the mouth.

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.

Asymptomatic carriage of this bacteria is common.

SPREAD

Breathing infected respiratory droplets (usually from coughing or sneezing) or direct contact with infected secretions or skin lesions. Close contact facilitates the spread of infection.

INCUBATION (time from exposure to onset of symptoms)

2 to 5 days

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD

Until 24 hours after antibiotic treatment begins. Asymptomatic carriers of the bacteria are unlikely to transmit to others.

EXCLUSION

Child care and School: Until 24 hours after antibiotic treatment begins, and the child is without fever.

DIAGNOSIS

Recommend parents/guardians call their healthcare provider. Strep may be identified in the throat either by using a rapid strep test, which can provide results the same day, or by throat culture.

TREATMENT

Oral or injectable antibiotics may be prescribed. Treatment may be dependent on how severe the infection is and will help prevent more serious illness such as rheumatic fever.

PREVENTION/CONTROL

- Cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing or cough/sneeze into your sleeve. Dispose of used tissues.

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with secretions from the nose or mouth, changing diapers, or using the toilet.
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily, and when soiled.
- Recommend individuals infected with strep start using a new toothbrush once they are no longer contagious.