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). Strep throat is spread by person-to-person contact with fluids from the nose or saliva. It can also be spread from touching contaminated surfaces and then touching your nose, mouth, or eyes. It commonly spreads among family or household members. Strep throat accounts for only a small portion of sore throats as most sore throats are caused by viruses.

What are the symptoms of strep throat?

Strep throat is generally a mild infection, but it can be very painful. Symptoms appear about 2 to 5 days after coming in contact with the strep bacteria. The most common symptoms of strep throat include:

- Red, swollen sore throat and tonsils, sometimes with white patches
- Fever
- Swollen, sore neck glands
- Headache

In addition to the symptoms above, children may also have:

- Stomach pain
- Nausea or vomiting
- Red rash that may feel rough like sandpaper, creases - when this happens it is called scarlatina, commonly known as scarlet fever

How is strep throat detected?

We use a sterile swab to take some of the fluid or mucus from the back of your throat. The fluid is tested through molecular testing. The advantages of molecular testing over the traditional rapid antigen or culture testing are that it has a higher sensitivity, meaning fewer false negative results and has a higher specificity, meaning fewer false positives results. Accurate results allow for more appropriate antibiotic use than compared to the standard rapid antigen or culture testing.

What if I test positive for strep throat?

Strep throat is treated with antibiotics. Antibiotics kill bacteria. Killing bacteria helps ease the symptoms of strep throat and helps it go away a little faster. Antibiotics can also prevent a few rare, but serious conditions that people who have strep throat may develop.

*Antibiotics are prescribed by health care providers. You are responsible for contacting your health care provider for any treatment related to the interpretation of your test results.

What if strep throat is left untreated?

If left untreated, strep throat and/or scarlet fever can cause complications, such as kidney inflammation or rheumatic fever. Rheumatic fever can develop if scarlet fever, is not treated early and properly. This can lead to painful and inflamed joints, a specific type of rash, or heart valve damage.

How can I prevent strep throat?

Here are some things you can do to prevent the spreading strep throat:

- Frequently wash your hands
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze
- Avoid sharing food utensils (drinking glasses, spoons, or forks)

What can I do to help my throat feel better?

- Talk with your healthcare provider about over the counter medications that can help with pain and fever
- Gargle with warm salt water (1/4 teaspoon of salt in 1 cup of warm water)
- Adults and older children can use throat lozenges, hard candy, pieces of ice, or popsicles
- Eat soft foods and drink cool drinks or warm liquids
- Get plenty of rest, sleep helps your body fight infection
- Drink plenty of water, this helps keep your throat lubricated and helps prevent dehydration
- Avoid acidic or spicy foods and drinks

Sources

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