

Strep Throat or Scarlet Fever

Date:

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child may have been exposed to **strep throat** or **scarlet fever** while at childcare.

What causes strep throat?

Strep throat is caused by bacteria called group A streptococcus. When strep throat comes with a certain kind of rash, it is called scarlet fever. Children under 2 years old very rarely get strep throat. In some children who are “strep carriers,” the bacteria live in the nose and mouth without causing any symptoms or illness.

What are the symptoms of strep throat?

- Red, painful throat
- White or yellow patches on the tonsils
- Fever
- Stomach ache
- Headache
- Tender, swollen neck glands
- Decreased appetite

What are the symptoms of scarlet fever?

- The same as strep throat, plus a fine red raised rash that looks like sunburn and feels like sandpaper, most often in armpits and groin area. Sometimes as the rash gets better the skin peels a little bit.

How serious is strep throat?

If not treated, strep throat can lead to serious complications.

How does a person get strep throat?

Strep bacteria are spread through respiratory secretions (fluids from the nose, mouth, and throat). They can be passed directly from person to person, by touching a contaminated surface, or via the air.

How long does it take to come down with strep throat after a person is exposed?

It usually takes 2 to 5 days after exposure for symptoms to develop.

When is a person with strep throat contagious?

A person with strep throat is most contagious until 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment.

How can I prevent my child or others from coming down with strep throat?

- Wash hands well and frequently, especially after wiping a nose or being in contact with someone who has strep throat.
- Cover coughs and sneezes and put used tissues into a trash can.
- Prevent sharing of food, drinks, and other items that may touch the mouth, such as eating utensils, toothbrushes, or towels.
- Wash dishes and utensils thoroughly in hot soapy water or a dishwasher.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize toys that touch the mouth of a child before use by another child.
- Make sure all of prescribed antibiotics are taken, even if a person feels better before they're finished.

What is the treatment for strep throat?

Strep throat infections are usually treated with an oral antibiotic that helps a child feel better sooner and helps prevent more serious illness. A child with strep throat should drink plenty of fluids – ice cream and popsicles can be helpful for children who refuse to drink because of a sore throat. Consult a health care provider if your child or other family members have symptoms of strep throat.

If my child develops strep throat, must he/she stay away from childcare?

Yes, until at least 24 hours after starting antibiotics and fever is gone.

