

Title: Strep Throat: Diagnosis and Treatment

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Abstract:

Strep throat is a bacterial infection of the throat (pharynx) caused by group A streptococcus. Most sore throats are not caused by these bacteria and are instead due to viruses such as the common cold. This pamphlet describes the very basics on strep throat including its cause, symptoms, risk factors, evaluation, and treatment. It also provides three links to resources on the internet that would be very useful for patients seeking more information.

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Primary Care Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up to date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.

## Treatment for Strep Throat

If you have been diagnosed with strep throat, antibiotics are used for treatment.



Oral antibiotics that may be used:

- \* Penicillin (may also be given in an injected form)
- \* Amoxicillin
- \* Azithromycin
- \* Clarithromycin
- \* Clindamycin
- \* Cephalosporin



Antibiotics only work against a bacterial infection and therefore will not speed the recovery of a sore throat caused by viral infections or allergies.

Antibiotics will help reduce the rare instances of complications due to strep throat, relieve symptoms, and decrease the time you are contagious.

## Recurring Strep Throat Infections

If you are having multiple recurring episodes of strep throat despite antibiotic treatment you may want to talk to your doctor about having your tonsils removed (tonsillectomy).

For more information on Strep Throat or sore throat, including pictures, symptoms, medications, and home remedies please see the following websites!

[www.mayoclinic.com/health/strep-throat/DS00260](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/strep-throat/DS00260)

[www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/strep-throat-topic-overview](http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/strep-throat-topic-overview)

[http://kidshealth.org/parent/infections/lung/strep\\_throat.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/infections/lung/strep_throat.html)



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## STREP THROAT:

### *Diagnosis and Treatment*



*University of Minnesota  
Family Medicine Clerkship  
Patient Education Tool*

## What is Strep Throat?

Strep throat is a bacterial infection in your throat (pharynx) causing irritation, inflammation, and pain.



The bacteria that cause **strep** throat are called Group A **Streptococcus**.

This type of bacteria is very contagious which means it can spread easily from person to person.

In fact, when someone is infected with these bacteria if they sneeze or cough the bacteria can spread through airborne droplets.

Also, these bacteria can survive on countertops, doorknobs, hand rails, and many more common objects we come in to contact every day.



Remember to cover your mouth and nose and wash your hands after sneezing or coughing.

## A Sore Throat is Usually Not Strep Throat

Sore throats are **MOST** commonly caused by **VIRAL** infections such as the common cold.

Other causes of a sore throat include allergies, yelling, smoke, dry air, and reflux from the stomach.

(See websites on back for more info on Sore Throats)

## What are the Symptoms of Strep Throat?

- 🔪 Sudden and severe sore throat
- 🔪 Fever - Temp over 100.5 F
- 🔪 Pain or difficulty swallowing
- 🔪 Swollen and tender lymph nodes in your neck
- 🔪 Red swollen tonsils
- 🔪 White patches or streaks on tonsils
- 🔪 No coughing, sneezing, or cold like symptoms

## Risk Factors

You are at a greater risk of getting strep throat if you are between the ages of 5 and 15, are around children frequently, or are in close contact with others that have strep throat. People with their tonsils removed can still get strep throat.

## At the Doctor's Office

If you are concerned that you may have strep throat you should see your family physician as soon as possible.



Some questions the doctor may ask include:

- 🔪 When did this start
- 🔪 Have you had fevers
- 🔪 Have you been coughing
- 🔪 Anyone else been sick

The doctor will then examine your mouth, throat, ears, nose, and neck.

Some clinics may swab your throat before seeing the doctor but if they haven't the doctor will then decide which tests you may or may not need to verify if you have strep throat.

## Tests for Strep Throat

### **Rapid antigen test:**

This is a fast way to look for foreign substances (antigens) in the throat. It can miss some infections so a throat culture is usually obtained too.

**Throat Culture:** A sterile swab is rubbed over the back of the throat/tonsils and is then rubbed onto special plates to see if anything grows (may take a couple days to get results)



**Rapid DNA test:** Newer rapid tests detect strep throat in a day or less from a throat swab.