

## SORE THORAT AND STREP

Most sore throats are caused by *viruses* as seen in colds or seasonal allergies. However, for children between the ages of two and eighteen, there is also a tendency to develop “strep throat.” This is caused by the *streptococcus* bacteria, which can lead to complications such as **scarlet fever, rheumatic fever and kidney disease**. Symptoms usually begin 2-4 days after contact, and the degree of illness can vary from child to child. Although you can’t always tell by looking, there is a somewhat characteristic appearance to strep throat. Most likely it is step when the tonsils are: **(1) beefy red, (2) the uvula is red and swollen (the fleshy part at the back of the throat that hangs down like a raindrop), and (3) there are big lymph nodes in the neck and under the chin**. The child may also talk as if he or she has a hot potato in the back of the throat. Interestingly, symptoms that tend **not** to be associated with strep throat are: stuffy nose, cough, and laryngitis. (These suggest another cause such as a cold or allergy). The only certain way to diagnose strep throat is by a doctor with a throat culture.

### It is best to contact your pediatrician if any of the following applies:

- ✓ There is a fever over 101.5°
- ✓ The onset of sore throat is *rapid*.
- ✓ The sore throat persists beyond one or two days.
- ✓ A rash appears with the sore throat, especially one that looks like sand paper or “goose bumps” along with the appearance of “strawberry tongue” (signs of scarlet fever).
- ✓ Complains of belly pain (indicating that the lymph nodes in the abdomen are swollen).
- ✓ Recent contact with another child who was diagnosed with strep throat or the skin infection, impetigo.
- ✓ Pus or greenish-yellow discharge seen in the back of the throat.
- ✓ Large, rubbery lymph nodes in the neck region.
- ✓ “Petechiae,” tiny red dots (hemorrhages) surrounding the tonsils and extending on the palate. Small white dots or patches may be visible on the palate or tonsils.

### TREATMENT:

Medical treatment is usually an antibiotic such as penicillin. It is important to finish the entire course of medication, even if your child seems healthy and recovered. I would also like to recommend that those who are being treated with antibiotics take *probiotics* (“good,” beneficial bacteria). These “friendly” bacteria (for example, *acidophilus*) are found in foods such as yogurt and buttermilk, and are also available as supplements from health food stores (generally the refrigerated section). In addition to antibiotic treatment, you can try home remedies: salt-water gargles, honey or lemon in tea, and acetaminophen or ibuprofen for pain and fever.

**Special note:** Remember to change the toothbrush after this and other illness.

### RETURN TO SCHOOL AFTER STREP THROAT:

Your child should not return to school until at least 24 hours after medication has started, and in accordance with your doctor’s orders. This is also a Health Department requirement.

Please call me at 301.767.3814 if you have questions.

Sincerely,

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