

Strep throat

What is strep throat?

Strep throat is an infection caused by bacteria. It is called "strep" because the bacteria that causes the infection is called streptococcus.

Adults with strep throat may have a sore throat, a fever and swollen neck glands. They usually don't have a cough or a runny nose.

How is strep throat treated?

Your doctor may give you an antibiotic-usually Penicillin. Treatment of strep infections with antibiotics prevents rare but serious complications that can result from strep, shortens the course of symptoms and decreases the risk of spreading the infection. It is important to take all of the medicine your doctor gives you.

Should all sore throats be treated with antibiotics?

No. Not every sore throat is strep throat. Bacteria only cause about 5% to 10% of sore throats. The rest are caused by viruses or other problems, and antibiotics will not help. Your doctor can do a test to make sure it is not strep throat.

How do I know I have strep throat?

A strep test is done by using a long cotton swab to take some material from the back of your throat and culturing it in the lab. It takes 24-48 hours to learn the results of a strep culture.

The strep culture can tell your doctor if you have strep throat. If something else is causing your sore throat, these tests do not tell what it is.

Can other people catch my strep throat?

Yes. You can give the infection to other people until you have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours. You can get sick within 3 days after being exposed to the germ. Once infected, you can pass the infection to others for up to 2 to 3 weeks even if you don't have symptoms.

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What's the difference between strep throat and a sore throat?

Most sore throats which can be accompanied by a runny nose, cough, hoarseness, and red eyes are caused by viruses. Sore throats usually clear up without requiring medical treatment. Although some people are quick to think that any painful sore throat is strep, sore throats are usually caused by a [viral infection](#) and not strep bacteria. A sore throat caused by a virus can be just as painful as strep throat. But if you have cold symptoms such as coughing, sneezing, or a runny or stuffy nose, you probably do not have strep throat.

The most common symptoms of strep throat are:

- ★ A sudden, severe sore throat.
- ★ Pain when you swallow.
- ★ Fever over 101°F (38.3°C).
- ★ Swollen tonsils and lymph nodes
- ★ White spots on the back of a bright red throat.

How is it spread & prevented?

Strep throat usually results from contact with an infected person. This can be through hand contact or from droplets in the air when a person with strep throat coughs or sneezes. If you come into contact with strep, it will take 2 to 5 days before you start to have symptoms.

Prevention:

- ★ ★ Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after touching any nasal or oral secretions.
- ★ ★ Use tissues to catch coughs and sneezes and throw used tissues in the trash.
- ★ ★ Cough in your elbow or sleeve if no tissues are available.
- ★ ★ Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after touching any nasal or oral secretions.
- ★ ★ Always wash your hands with soap and water before preparing food or eating.

How do I get my results?

If your throat culture is positive (meaning you have strep) you will receive a call from the lab results nurse at the health center. The nurse will discuss the findings and recommend the appropriate course of treatment.

If your throat culture is negative you will not receive a call.

If you have further questions you can call the lab results nurse at 607-274-3737.