

## My Throat Hurts!

If someone in your family or at school has strep throat, there is a good chance you may get it too. Strep throat is spread when healthy people come into contact with people who have it. When a person with strep throat sneezes or blows his or her nose and you are close by, or if you share the same forks, spoons, or straws, the bacteria can spread to you. If you get strep throat, you will start to feel sick within 5 days after you've been exposed to it.

What will you do? *Tell your parents! Go to the doctor!* Your doctor will look into your mouth to see if your throat is red and your tonsils are swollen and covered with white or yellow spots. He or she will also look for small red spots on the roof of your mouth. Most of the time, strep will give you a sore throat, headache, stomach ache, and fever.

To prove that what you have is strep throat, your doctor may do one or two tests. First, the doctor can do a rapid strep test to check for strep bacteria. He or she will rub a cotton swab over the back of your throat. With this test, the doctor may be able to find out in less than 1 hour if you have strep throat.

If the first test doesn't prove anything, then your doctor may do a longer test called a throat culture. A swab from your throat will then be rubbed on a special dish and the dish will be left to sit for two nights. Sometimes this test will make you gag - but it doesn't hurt. If you have strep throat, streptococci bacteria will usually grow in the dish within the next 1 to 2 days.

If you end up having strep throat, your doctor will give you an antibiotic which is a medicine that kills bacteria. Usually the antibiotic used for strep throat is a form of penicillin. You will take penicillin as a pill, a liquid, or a shot.

To make sure the bacteria go away completely and don't spread to other parts of your body, you must finish all of the medicine and that will usually only take a week to 10 days.

Your mom or dad may give you acetaminophen to get rid of aches, pains, and fever. You'll want to have soothing drinks, like tea and warm chicken soup. It's best to avoid spicy and acidic foods, like orange juice, because they could irritate your tender throat.

Your doctor will tell you to stay home from school until you have been taking the antibiotic for at least 24 to 48 hours. This way, you won't spread the bacteria to others.

It's hard to prevent a sore throat. But you can take these steps to try to prevent it:

- Make sure the person with strep throat covers his or her mouth when sneezing and coughing.
- Don't handle used tissues or other germ items.
- Wash your hands regularly, especially before cooking and eating.
- Wash dishes and silverware in hot, soapy water.
- Keep sores and cuts clean because strep can get in there and cause problems, too.

Strep throat is no fun, but after feeling sick for 2 or 3 days, most kids start feeling better.

