

Strep Throat

"Strep throat" means a sore throat caused by bacteria called streptococci (strep-toe-KAW-ki). Antibiotic medicine must be given as soon as possible to prevent these germs from causing kidney or heart problems (rheumatic fever) or possibly causing kidney problems (glomerulonephritis).

Your child may be given a shot of penicillin or a prescription for medicine to take by mouth. **If your child is allergic to penicillin, be sure to tell the doctor.** Another medicine will be prescribed.

If your child is taking medicine by mouth, it is very important to take all the medicine for ten days, as ordered, even after he or she feels better (Picture 1).

Symptoms

If your child has strep throat, he may have some or all of these symptoms:

- The illness comes on suddenly.
- "Strawberry" appearance to the tongue
- Fever
- Sore throat
- Reddened, swollen tonsils, sometimes with "yellow patches"
- Bad-smelling breath
- Swollen glands in the neck
- Headache
- Pain in the abdomen (tummy), sometimes with vomiting
- A red rash that "feels like sandpaper." It may appear 12 to 48 hours after the first symptoms. This is known as scarlet fever or scarlatina.
- Irritability or fussiness
- Poor appetite
- Sleeping more than usual



Picture 1 Have your child take all the medicine for 10 days, even after he feels better.

How to Care for your Child

- Your child should stay home from school or child care until he has been taking antibiotic medicine for 24 hours (or for 24 hours after a penicillin shot) and has no fever.
- If your child has a fever or throat pain, give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol®) as directed. **Do not give aspirin or products that contain aspirin.** If the fever continues for more than 2 days after your child has been taking an antibiotic, the doctor should see your child.
- Give your child lots of warm liquids such as water, warm fruit juice, or warm broth. Give small amounts of liquid often (Picture 2).
- Give soft foods only when he or she wants them. Your child may not want to eat much if it hurts to swallow. He will probably eat more as he feels better.
- For children over age 8, salt water gargles (1/2 teaspoon salt in 1 cup warm water) may help the throat feel better. **Do not let your child swallow the salt water; have him or her spit it out.**



Picture 2 Give your child lots of clear liquids to drink

How to Protect Others

Strep throat is contagious ("catching"). It is spread by direct contact and through the spread of droplets from the nose and mouth (such as sneezing and coughing). To keep others from getting strep throat:

- Keep your child away from others for 24 hours after the medicine is started and until he has no fever.
- Make sure others do not drink from your child's glass or use his eating utensils.
- Keep a paper or plastic bag taped to his or her bed or couch (wherever your child is resting). Have your child put used tissues in this bag. Moisture from the child's nose and mouth is contagious.
- Have your child wash his or her hands often using soap.
- Wash your hands after touching your child.
- Other family members should also wash their hands often.

How to Protect Others, continued

- Replace your child's toothbrush as soon as the illness is over. (Strep throat germs may still be on your child's toothbrush.)
- Tell the school nurse and your child's teacher that your child has strep throat. It is important for school personnel to know this so that other parents can be told to watch for symptoms in their children.
- If any other family member gets a sore throat, he or she should be checked by a doctor to see if medical treatment is needed.

Other Helping Hands

These other Helping Hands can help you care for your child:

- *Temperature: Oral, Rectal, and Axillary*, HH-II-27
- *Fever*, HH-I-105

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.