

# **STREP THROAT**

## **Super painful red polka-dot throat.**

Strep throat is a relatively common childhood infection featuring a varying combination of fever, sore throat, poor feeding, rash, headache, and belly pain. This page will you know what it is, how to prevent it, and what can be done about it.

### **WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?**

As mentioned, the symptoms of strep throat are variable. Almost all children get a sore throat. Younger children with sore throats will turn away from food or begin eating and stop after only a few bites. Some children will get a fever and rash along with the sore throat (this is called “scarlet fever”). Some children will have only headaches and belly pain. And still others may have a combination of many of these symptoms.

### **HOW DO YOU CONTRACT STREP THROAT?**

Strep throat is especially common in early school-age children - the 4- and 5-year-olds. It's also fairly contagious. It is caused by a very common bacterium called *Streptococcus pyogenes*, which can live inside the nose and throat (and many other places) of otherwise healthy children and adults. When children get sick with strep throat, the bacterium gets in the saliva, nasal discharge, and on the hands of the ill person. From there, it's usually spread to other children by direct contact (touching) and indirect contact (sharing of personal items). Even with the strictest cleaning regimens, this disease can spread quickly through daycare. This is why it is very important to make sure your child stays home from daycare and sees a doctor if he or she has any symptoms of strep throat.

### **HOW IS STREP THROAT TREATED?**

If untreated, strep throat will go away, though it will take longer to go away - meaning more sick days, more pain, and more spread to other children. With some types of strep throat, there is also a slightly higher chance of more serious problems (like kidney or heart problems) if left untreated, so it's best to get strep throat checked out by your pediatrician right away.

We like to do a “rapid strep” test in our office to make sure we've got the right diagnosis first. This takes about 5 minutes and is about 95% accurate. Strep throat can be treated with one shot of antibiotics (in the bum), or 5-10 days of oral antibiotics. Fever and sore throat can be treated with Tylenol or Motrin. Talk to our staff about the proper use of these medicines.

## **HOW CAN STREP THROAT BE PREVENTED?**

There are three main ways to prevent further strep throat infections. First, everyone in the family must observe strict handwashing to keep the strep from spreading from your hands. Second, you need to keep a clean environment by sanitizing toys, and not sharing any personal items (including eating utensils, cups, towels, face cloths, etc.). It's also a good idea to get a new toothbrush for the child who is being treated for strep throat, as the bacterium can live on the old toothbrush. Third, and most importantly, all children who have strep throat should stay home and away from other children until they've been **on antibiotics for at least 24 hours.**

## **WHEN SHOULD I CALL?**

Sore throat, fever, headache, and belly ache in a young child is suspicious and should be checked out by a doctor. High fever (102.2F or greater) and poor feeding is another worrisome combination.