

# STREP THROAT in Children



Paediatrics & Neonatology Department

## What is strep throat?

Strep throat is an infection caused by bacteria and leads to a sore throat. However, most sore throats are caused by a virus, and are not strep throat.



About 3 out of every 10 children with a sore throat actually have strep throat. It is most common in school-age children.

## How can I tell if my child has strep throat?

It is hard to tell the difference between strep throat and a sore throat caused by a virus. But there are some clues you can look for.

People who have strep throat often have:

- Severe throat pain
- Fever (temperature higher than 100.4°F or 38°C)
- Swollen glands in the neck

You might also be able to see redness on the roof of the child's mouth, or white patches in the back of the throat.

Children older than 5 years who have strep throat do not usually have a cough, runny nose, or itchy or red eyes. Strep throat is uncommon in very young children, but if they do get it, it can cause a runny or stuffy nose, plus a slight fever. Babies with strep throat might act fussy and not want to eat.

Is there a test for strep throat?

Yes. If you think your child might have strep throat, a doctor or nurse can easily check for it. They can run a swab (Q-Tip)

along the back of the child's throat and test it for the bacteria that cause strep throat.

Does my child need antibiotics?

If a test shows that your child has strep throat, then YES, they need antibiotics. Most people with strep throat get better without antibiotics, but doctors and nurses often prescribe them anyway. That's because antibiotics can prevent problems that strep throat can sometimes cause. Plus, antibiotics can reduce the symptoms of strep throat and keep it from spreading to other people.

What can I do to help my child feel better?

Make sure that your child takes their antibiotics as directed.

There are also other ways to help relieve symptoms:

### Soothing foods and drinks

Give your child things that are easy to swallow, like tea or soup, or popsicles to suck on. Your child might not feel like eating or drinking, but it's important that they get enough liquids. Offer different warm and cold drinks for your child to try.



### Medicines

Acetaminophen / paracetamol or ibuprofen can help with throat pain. The correct dose depends on your child's weight, so ask your child's doctor how much to give.



Do not give aspirin or medicines that contain aspirin to children younger than 18 years. In children, aspirin can cause a serious problem called Reye syndrome. Do not give children throat sprays or cough drops, either. Throat sprays and cough drops contain medicine, but they are no better at relieving throat pain than hard candies. Plus, in some cases, they can cause an allergic reaction or other side effects.

### Add moisture to the air

You can use a cool mist humidifier to keep the air from getting too dry. If you don't have a humidifier, you can sit with your child in a closed bathroom with a warm shower running a few times a day.



### Avoid smoke

Do not smoke around your child or let others smoke near them. Being around smoke can irritate the throat. Plus, it's dangerous to the child's health.



### Other treatments

For children who are older than 4 to 5 years, sucking on hard candies or a lollipop might help.



For children older than 6 to 8 years, gargling with warm salt water might help.

### When can my child go back to school?

Your child should be on antibiotics before going back to school. This is to avoid spreading the infection to others. If your child starts taking antibiotics by 5:00 PM, they will probably no longer be contagious by the next morning. If your child is feeling better and no longer has a fever, the doctor might say that they can return to school the next morning.



### What problems should I watch for?

Call your child's doctor or nurse for advice if:

- Your child is not getting enough to eat or drink.
- Your child develops a red rash or peeling skin.
- Your child develops joint pain within 1 month of having strep throat.
- Your child's urine becomes red or brown.
- Your child still has symptoms after finishing antibiotics.

### How can I keep my child from getting strep throat again?

Wash your child's hands often with soap and water. This is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of infection. You can use an alcohol rub instead, but make sure the hand rub gets everywhere on your child's hands.

Try to teach your child about other ways to avoid spreading germs, such as not touching their face after being around a sick person.

## Contact us:

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