

SORE THROAT or STREP THROAT??

WHAT CAUSES A SORE THROAT?

- Many common viruses, such as those that cause the common "cold" or "flu" -- *not treated with antibiotics*
- Mouth breathing due to stuffy nose, or snoring
- Allergies
- Sinus drainage or post nasal drip
- Bacterial infections such as Streptococcus (strep)



IS IT STREP THROAT?

Suspect strep throat if you see some of the following:

- Tonsils and throat are swollen and beefy red and covered in a gray/white/yellow coat or patches
- Tiny, pinpoint red or purple spots on the roof of the mouth
- Pain begins suddenly and worsens with swallowing
- Fever greater than 101 degrees
- Nausea, loss of appetite, stomachache
- Rash which is fine, red, and feels like sandpaper (scarlet fever) - that may itch, often begins on face, then spreads to trunk, then limbs
- Headache

The only way to be sure the sore throat is caused by strep is to do a throat culture, in which the doctor uses a cotton swab to wipe the tonsils. If the throat culture is positive for strep, antibiotics will be prescribed. **It is important to complete all the antibiotics even after symptoms improve.**

- Although a strep throat can go away without treatment, complications may develop, such as abscesses, rheumatic fever, and kidney disease which bear lifelong consequences.
- Children can return to school 24 hours after antibiotics are started.

A sore throat is **less likely** to be strep throat if it is part of a typical cold, with runny nose, cough, sneezing, hoarseness, and similar symptoms.

HOME CARE

- Drink warm soothing liquids
- Gargle with warm salt water—1/2 teaspoon of salt per one cup water
- Cold liquids or popsicles
- Cool mist vaporizer or humidifier to moisten and soothe a dry and painful throat.
- Pain relievers, as recommended by your physician
- Special cleaning of eating and drinking utensils of child with strep, to prevent spread of the infection to family members
- Obtain a new toothbrush before the antibiotics are finished to prevent re-infection

References:

Red Book, 2003 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases, 26th edition. American Academy of Pediatrics. 2003, Elk Grove Village, Illinois.

Minor Emergencies: Splinters to Fractures, Buttaravoli, Philip; Stair, Thomas; Mosby, 2000, St. Louis.

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