

FACT SHEET

Strep Throat/Scarlet Fever

What is strep throat/scarlet fever?

Strep throat is an infection in the throat and tonsils caused by bacteria called group A *Streptococcus*. Strep throat is a common type of sore throat in children and less common in adults. In general, strep throat is a mild infection, but it can be very painful.

A person with strep throat can also develop a rash, known as scarlet fever. The rash is typically a fine red rash that most commonly appears on the neck, chest, under arms, elbows, groin, and on the inner thighs.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms usually begin about 2-5 days after exposure.

Strep throat:

- Sore throat that can start very quickly
- Pain when swallowing
- Fever
- Red and swollen tonsils, sometimes with white patches or streaks of pus
- Tiny red spots on roof of mouth
- Swollen lymph nodes on front of neck

Scarlet fever:

- Red rash with fine bumps
- Fever/sore throat
- Chills
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.

How is it spread?

The bacteria that cause strep throat are spread through tiny droplets in the air when an infected person sneezes or coughs. People can get sick from sharing drinking glasses or plates with an infected person, or by touching something with droplets on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

How is it prevented?

- Wash hands frequently.
- Cover your cough and sneeze with a tissue and throw the tissue directly into the trash.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- Stay home when you are sick.

How is it treated?

Strep throat is treated with antibiotics like penicillin or amoxicillin. Get plenty of rest and stay hydrated. Someone with strep throat should start feeling better in just a day or two after starting antibiotics. Call the doctor if symptoms persist after taking antibiotics for 48 hours. It is possible for serious complications, like rheumatic fever, to occur if strep throat is left untreated or not treated properly.

People who are infected with strep throat/scarlet fever should stay home from work, school, or daycare until they no longer have a fever and have taken an antibiotic for 24 hours.

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