

**What is strep throat?**

“Strep” is short for streptococcal, which can cause a variety of diseases such as strep throat and skin infections such as impetigo. This same organism sometimes causes more severe illness such as kidney infections, scarlet fever, heart valve infections, deep skin and muscle infections and rheumatic fever.

Who is at risk for strep throat?

Anyone can be at risk for strep throat, although it typically occurs in children between the ages of 6 and 12. Strep throat occurs most often during the late fall, winter and early spring. For the most part, humans are the only source of the bacteria.

What are the symptoms of strep throat?

People with strep throat may have few or no symptoms. Generally they will have sudden onset of fever, sore throat and tender and enlarged tonsils.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms of strep throat usually occur one to three days after being infected.

How is strep throat spread?

Strep throat is spread through large respiratory droplets (coughing, sneezing) or direct contact with people who are ill. It is rarely spread by touching surfaces or objects.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

If left untreated, people can spread strep for 10 to 21 days, and, in some cases, they may spread the illness for weeks or months. If treated, the ability to spread the illness to others usually ends after 24 hours.

How is a person diagnosed?

Usually, a rapid strep test is done by swabbing the throat. Other tests include growing the bacteria in cultures.

What is the treatment?

Penicillin or other antibiotics are used to treat strep throat. Make sure to follow all directions when taking antibiotics to reduce the chance of relapse and developing antibiotic resistant strains.

Does past infection make a person immune?

Repeated infections of strep throat are common.

Should children or others be excluded from day care, school, work or other activities if they have strep throat?

Recommendations from the health department include:

- People with strep throat should stay home until they have been on appropriate antibiotics for 24 hours.
- During an outbreak, people with sore throats should stay home until strep has been ruled out.

What can be done to prevent the spread of streptococcal?

If diagnosed with strep, persons should take the appropriate antibiotics and remain at home for 24 hours. Wash hands often with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer. Always use appropriate respiratory etiquette and don't share food or drinks.

Additional Information:

Additional information is available by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

Resource: American Academy of Pediatrics. Pickering LK, ed. *Red Book: 2003 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases*. 26th ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2003:126-128.

