

# Strep Throat or Scarlet Fever

Date:

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child may have been exposed to **strep throat** or **scarlet fever** while at childcare.

## What causes strep throat?

Strep throat is caused by bacteria called group A streptococcus. When strep throat comes with a certain kind of rash, it is called scarlet fever. Children under 2 years old very rarely get strep throat. In some children who are “strep carriers,” the bacteria live in the nose and mouth without causing any symptoms or illness.

## What are the symptoms of strep throat?

- Red, painful throat
- White or yellow patches on the tonsils
- Fever
- Stomach ache
- Headache
- Tender, swollen neck glands
- Decreased appetite

## What are the symptoms of scarlet fever?

- The same as strep throat, plus a fine red raised rash that looks like sunburn and feels like sandpaper, most often in armpits and groin area. Sometimes as the rash gets better the skin peels a little bit.

## How serious is strep throat?

If not treated, strep throat can lead to serious complications.

## How does a person get strep throat?

Strep bacteria are spread through respiratory secretions (fluids from the nose, mouth, and throat). They can be passed directly from person to person, by touching a contaminated surface, or via the air.

## How long does it take to come down with strep throat after a person is exposed?

It usually takes 2 to 5 days after exposure for symptoms to develop.

## When is a person with strep throat contagious?

A person with strep throat is most contagious until 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment.

## How can I prevent my child or others from coming down with strep throat?

- Wash hands well and frequently, especially after wiping a nose or being in contact with someone who has strep throat.
- Cover coughs and sneezes and put used tissues into a trash can.
- Prevent sharing of food, drinks, and other items that may touch the mouth, such as eating utensils, toothbrushes, or towels.
- Wash dishes and utensils thoroughly in hot soapy water or a dishwasher.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize toys that touch the mouth of a child before use by another child.
- Make sure all of prescribed antibiotics are taken, even if a person feels better before they're finished.

## What is the treatment for strep throat?

Strep throat infections are usually treated with an oral antibiotic that helps a child feel better sooner and helps prevent more serious illness. A child with strep throat should drink plenty of fluids – ice cream and popsicles can be helpful for children who refuse to drink because of a sore throat. Consult a health care provider if your child or other family members have symptoms of strep throat.

## If my child develops strep throat, must he/she stay away from childcare?

Yes, until at least 24 hours after starting antibiotics and fever is gone.

