



What is Strep Throat? Scarlet Fever?

Strep throat is a sore throat caused by streptococcal bacteria. It is important to diagnose and treat strep throat with an antibiotic because significant problems may result if it is left untreated. Strep throat can occur at any age, but is most common in school-age children. It can occur year round, but peaks in late winter and early spring. Scarlet fever is also caused by streptococcal bacteria and is characterized by a skin rash, usually in children under 18 years of age. A fine red rash appears most often on the neck, chest, abdomen, under arms, elbows, groin, and on the inner surfaces of the thighs. The rash feels like sandpaper. In addition to the rash, a person with scarlet fever may have the same symptoms as strep throat.

How is Strep Throat/Scarlet Fever spread?

It is spread through the respiratory droplets of an infected person when they cough or sneeze. It can also be spread by direct contact with nose or throat discharges of an infected person by kissing, sharing drinking glasses, water bottles, or eating utensils.

How is Strep Throat/Scarlet Fever treated?

A throat culture or strep test is needed to accurately diagnose a strep throat. Strep throat and scarlet fever are treated with antibiotics. It is very important to complete antibiotic therapy as recommended. Untreated or inadequately treated streptococcal infections can lead to serious complications such as kidney disease, rheumatic fever, or throat abscesses. Adequate hydration and rest are also important.

How can Strep Throat/Scarlet Fever be prevented?

- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly.
- Cough or sneeze into tissue. Dispose of tissue properly.

- Wash hands after using a tissue for a cough or sneeze.
- Exclude persons known to have a strep infection from school until 24 hours after beginning antibiotics.

Symptoms of Strep Throat/Scarlet Fever:

- Sudden onset of fever
- Sore throat with reddened, white or yellow (tonsil area)
- Painful swallowing
- Swollen and tender lymph nodes
- Whitish coating on tongue
- Ear pain
- Skin rash in the presence of the above symptoms may indicate scarlet fever

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