

# Fact Sheet

# Strep Throat



## What is Strep Throat?

Strep throat is an infection in the throat and tonsils caused by group A streptococcus bacteria (called “group A strep”). Group A strep bacteria can also live in a person’s nose and throat without causing illness.

## How is it Spread?

Streptococcal bacteria are highly contagious. They can spread through airborne droplets when someone with the infection coughs or sneezes, or through shared food or drinks. A person can also pick up the bacteria from a doorknob or other surface and transfer them to the nose, mouth or eyes.

## Signs and Symptoms

The most common symptoms of strep throat include:

- § Sore throat, usually starts quickly and can cause severe pain when swallowing
- § A fever (101°F or above)
- § Red and swollen tonsils, sometimes with white patches or streaks of pus
- § Tiny red spots on the area at the back of the roof of the mouth (the soft or hard palate)
- § Headache, nausea, or vomiting
- § Swollen lymph nodes in the neck
- § Body aches or rash

## Diagnosis

Healthcare professionals can test for strep by swabbing the throat to quickly to see if group A strep bacteria are causing a sore throat; just looking at the throat is not enough to make a diagnosis.

## Treatment

The strep test will help the healthcare professional decide if a person needs antibiotics, which can:

- § Decrease the length of time a person is sick
- § Reduce symptoms
- § Help prevent the spread of infection to friends and family members
- § Prevent more serious complications, such as tonsil and sinus infections, and acute rheumatic fever (a rare inflammatory disease that can affect the heart, joints, skin, and brain)

People with strep infections should start feeling better in just a day or two after starting antibiotics. Call a healthcare professional if the sick individual is not feeling better after taking antibiotics for 48 hours. People with strep throat should stay home from work, school, or daycare until they have taken antibiotics for at least 24 hours so they don’t spread the infection to others.

Unless a healthcare professional tells an individual to stop taking the medicine, be sure to finish the entire prescription, even when starting to feel better. When a person stops taking antibiotics early, they risk getting an infection later that is resistant to antibiotic treatment.

## Prevention

The best way to keep from getting strep throat is to wash hands often and avoid sharing eating utensils, like forks or cups. It is especially important for anyone with a sore throat to wash their hands often and cover their mouth when coughing and sneezing. There is no vaccine to prevent strep throat.



***For more sources of information on this topic visit:***

ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT [www.scchealth.co](http://www.scchealth.co)

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES [www.michigan.gov/mdhhs](http://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs)

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

MAYO CLINIC [www.mayoclinic.org](http://www.mayoclinic.org)