

Strep Throat

Strep throat is a throat infection triggered by bacteria known as Streptococci. There are various types of streptococci, but the one requiring antibiotic treatment is Group A strep.

Strep infections are highly contagious and typically transmit from person to person, especially common among school-age children. Adults without exposure to children and children under 2 years old are less likely to contract strep throat. Strep throat symptoms may alleviate within 24 hours of treatment initiation and rarely persist beyond 5 days. Untreated strep or incomplete medication adherence can lead to rheumatic fever, potentially causing heart valve damage and affecting joints and brain.



Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms of a strep infection may encompass:

- Sore, red throat
- Painful swallowing
- Fever
- Chills
- Headaches
- Muscle aches and pains
- Fatigue
- Swollen, tender lymph nodes in the neck
- Loss of appetite

Diagnosis

Healthcare providers typically assess symptoms and conduct a throat examination. A strep test is often performed by swabbing the back of the throat to collect a bacterial sample, which is then lab-tested.

Self-Care Guidelines

Adhering to the prescribed treatment regimen and following these tips can help manage symptoms effectively. Maintain hydration by consuming clear fluids and nutritious liquids, and avoid solid foods if swallowing is painful. Avoid smoking and secondhand smoke. Gargle with salt water, suck on lozenges or hard candy, and minimize talking to rest your voice. Use a humidifier or vaporizer, apply warm compresses to your neck, and rest if fever is present. Consult your healthcare provider before taking aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen to alleviate fever and pain, especially if you are under 21 years old.

Preventing Spread

To prevent the transmission of strep to others, avoid close contact until 24 to 48 hours after beginning antibiotic treatment. When coughing, use tissues and dispose of them properly. Handwashing should be prioritized, especially before handling food or utensils, after coughing, and after touching surfaces such as telephones or door handles. In shared spaces, use disposable cups and towels, and avoid sharing food and utensils.