

Strep Throat Fact Sheet

What is it?

Strep throat is a throat infection caused by Strep A bacteria. (Most sore throats are caused by a virus.) Strep throat is:

- Very common
- Usually not serious
- Easy to spread from person-to-person

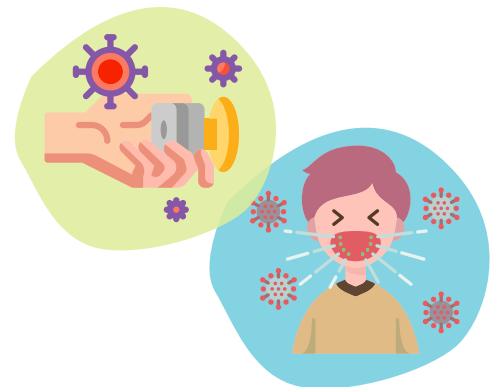


Strep throat usually goes away on its own. If you do need a doctor to help you heal, there are tests and medicines that are specifically for strep throat.

How does it spread?

Strep throat germs spread through:

- **Respiratory droplets:** this is the liquid that comes out when you cough or sneeze.
- **Direct contact:** when you touch something with Strep A bacteria, like a doorknob, you get germs on your hands. You can get sick from the germs if you touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.



How do I know if I have it?

Strep throat is usually a mild illness, but it can be very painful. You may notice:

- Fever
- Pain when swallowing
- Sore throat that can start very quickly and may look red
- Red and swollen tonsils
- White patches or streaks of pus on the tonsils
- Tiny, red spots on the roof of the mouth, called petechiae
- Swollen lymph nodes in the front of the neck



Some people get other symptoms, especially children. **However, if you notice a cough or a runny nose, this is probably a virus, NOT strep throat.**

How can I protect myself?

You can protect yourself from strep germs in the same ways you protect from other germs:

- Wash your hands with soap and water throughout the day.
- "Clean" coughs and sneezes:
 - Cover your mouth, put dirty tissues in the garbage can, then wash your hands.
- Clean **all** items touched by someone sick after each use.
- Do not kiss or share drinks/food with someone who is sick or has strep throat.



How should I take care of myself or someone who has strep throat?

Doctors treat strep throat with antibiotics. Medicine will help:

- You heal more quickly from strep.
- Improve your symptoms.
- Prevent the germs from spreading to others.
- Protect you from a worse infection by the same germs, such as rheumatic fever.



It is important to take all of the medicine, even if you or your child start to feel better.

When should I call a doctor?

- If you or your child have symptoms of strep, your doctor can do a throat swab to test for it. If you **do** have strep, the doctor will give you medicine.
- Someone with strep throat should start feeling better in just a day or two after starting antibiotics. Call the doctor if you or your child **are not** feeling better after taking the medicine for 48 hours (2 days).



To learn more, visit the [Strep Throat](http://www.cdc.gov) webpage at www.cdc.gov.