

Tonsillitis (Strep Throat)

What is strep throat?

Strep throat is an infection of the tonsils, which are tissue in the back of the throat. It is caused by a specific type of bacteria (group A beta-hemolytic streptococcus). It is most common in children three to 15 years of age.

What are the symptoms?

You may have a fever and sore throat that is red with white or yellow spots. You may have swollen lymph nodes on your neck and under your jaw. If you have a cough, red eyes, and runny nose, strep throat is less likely.

How is it diagnosed?

Your doctor will ask you questions to see if you are at risk. They will likely look at your throat and feel your neck. If your doctor thinks you have it, they will swab the back of your throat to test for bacteria. A rapid strep test gives results the same day, and a culture result is usually ready in two days.

Do I need antibiotics?

Strep throat usually gets better by itself in about three to five days. Antibiotics can help keep you

from spreading it to other people and can prevent complications. However, complications are unlikely even without antibiotics. If you take antibiotics, you may feel better about one day earlier than if you did not take them.

What other treatments can I take for strep throat?

You can take over-the-counter pain relievers such as acetaminophen (one brand: Tylenol) and ibuprofen (one brand: Advil) if those are safe for you. Drinking hot tea and honey and gargling salt water can help your sore throat feel better.

Does my family need to be treated?

If someone in your home has symptoms of strep throat, they should be tested. Only people who test positive for bacteria need to be treated.

When will I feel better?

Most people begin to feel better 24 hours after starting antibiotics. Most people who do not take antibiotics feel better within three to five days. You can go back to school or work 24 hours after starting antibiotics.

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INFORMATION

From Your Family Doctor

Tonsillitis (Strep Throat) *(continued)*

When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor if your symptoms do not start to get better within three days. If you get a rash or have trouble breathing after taking antibiotics, call your doctor right away. Sometimes a different antibiotic is needed, or you may have an infection other than strep throat. If you are feeling better, a follow-up visit is not usually needed.

Would having my tonsils taken out stop me from getting strep throat again?

It may help if you have a lot of throat infections. Surgery is only recommended for certain people.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/groupastrep/diseases-public/strep-throat.html>

National Library of Medicine's Medline Plus

<https://medlineplus.gov/tonsillitis.html>

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