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## Strep Throat Infection

### What is strep throat?

Strep throat is an inflamed (red and swollen) throat caused by infection with bacteria called *Streptococci*. It is diagnosed with a throat culture or a rapid strep test at the doctor's office.

With treatment the fever and much of the sore throat are usually gone within 24 hours. It is important to treat strep throat to prevent some rare but serious complications such as rheumatic fever (a disease that affects the heart) or glomerulonephritis (a disease that affects the kidneys).

### How can I take care of my child?

- **Antibiotics** Take the antibiotic as your doctor has instructed. Try not to forget any of the doses. If the medicine is a liquid, store the antibiotic in the refrigerator and use a measuring spoon to be sure that you give the right amount. Your child should take the medicine until all the pills are gone or the bottle is empty. Even though your child will feel better in a few days, give the antibiotic for 10 days to keep the strep throat from flaring up again. An antibiotic injection can be given if your child will not take oral medicines or if it will be impossible for you to give the medicine regularly. (Note: If given correctly, the oral antibiotic works just as rapidly and effectively as a shot.)
- **Fever and pain relief** Children over age 1 can sip warm chicken broth or apple juice. Children over age 4 can suck on hard candy (butterscotch seems to be a soothing flavor) or lollipops. Give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for throat pain or fever over 102°F (38.9°C).
- **Diet** Swollen tonsils can make some foods hard to swallow. Provide your child with a diet of soft foods for a few days if he prefers it.
- **Contagiousness** Your child is no longer contagious after he has taken the antibiotic for 24 hours. Therefore, your child can return to school after one day if he is feeling better and the fever is gone.
- **Throat cultures for the family** Strep throat can spread to others in the family. Any child or adult who lives in your home and has a fever, sore throat, runny nose, headache, vomiting, or sores; doesn't want to eat; or develops these symptoms in the next 5 days should be brought in for a throat culture. In most homes only the people who are sick need throat cultures. (In families where relatives have had rheumatic fever or frequent strep infections, everyone should have a throat culture.) Your physician will call you if any of the cultures are positive for strep.
- **Recurrent strep throat and recultures** Usually repeat throat cultures are not necessary if your child takes all of the antibiotic. However, about 10 percent of children with strep throat don't respond to initial antibiotic treatment. Therefore, if your child continues to have a sore throat or mild fever after treatment is completed, return for a second throat culture. If it is positive, your child will be retreated with a different antibiotic.

### When should I call my child's health care provider?

Call IMMEDIATELY if:

- Your child starts drooling or has great difficulty swallowing.
- Your child is acting very sick.

Call during office hours if:

- The fever lasts over 48 hours after your child starts taking an antibiotic.
  - You have other questions or concerns.
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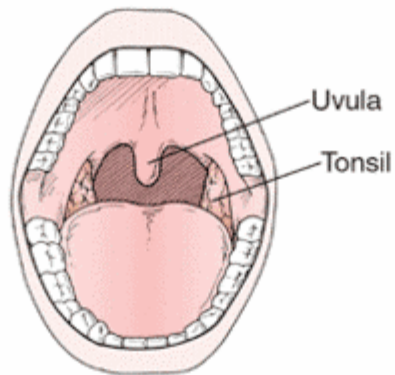
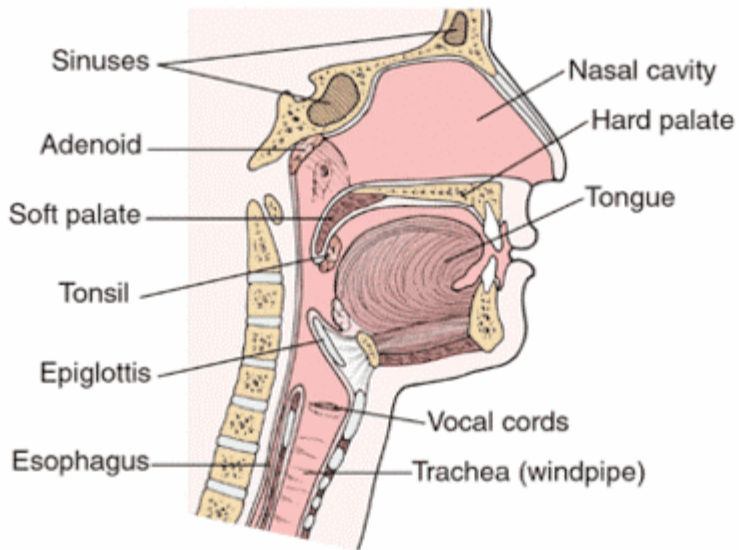
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Written by B.D. Schmitt, M.D., author of "Your Child's Health," Bantam Books.

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# Head and Throat



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