



Greenwich Public Schools
School Health Services

Strep Throat (Streptococcal Pharyngitis) and Scarlet Fever

Dear Parents:

There has been STREP THROAT diagnosed in your child's classroom. Please monitor your child carefully and notify your physician if your child develops any of the signs or symptoms listed below. Some children will rapidly develop many symptoms while others may have only one. Rarely are they without symptoms. Different bacteria and viruses cause tonsillitis or red sore throats. Strep Throat is caused by a specific bacterium: Group A Beta Hemolytic Streptococcus. You cannot tell by looking at the red throat if it is Strep. A throat culture is required. A negative culture or 24 hours of antibiotics, and your child has not had a fever without the use of fever reducing medication are required before returning.

What are the signs or symptoms?

- Sore throat
- Fever
- Stomachache
- Headache
- Swollen lymph nodes in neck
- Decreased appetite

Strep is much less likely if there is...

- Runny nose
- Cough
- Congestion
- Children younger than 3 years with group A streptococcal infection rarely have a sore throat. Most commonly, these children have persistent nasal discharge (which may be associated with a foul odor from the mouth), fever, irritability and loss of appetite

What is Scarlet Fever?

- A fine red rash that makes the skin feel like sandpaper. Scarlet Fever is caused by toxins produced by a strep infection of the throat or another area of the body. The rash is usually quite prominent in the armpit and groin area, often making the creases in the bed of the elbow and back of the knee pinker than usual. Sometimes, the area around the mouth has a pale appearance.
- Children who have Scarlet Fever are generally not any sicker than children with Strep Throat who do not have the rash.

What are the incubation and contagious periods?

- Incubation Period: 2 to 5 days
- Contagious Period: The risk of spread is reduced when a person who is ill with Strep Throat is treated with antibiotics. Up to 25% of asymptomatic schoolchildren and a small number of adults carry the bacteria that cause Strep Throat in their nose and throat and are not ill. In outbreaks, a higher proportion of children with no symptoms of illness may be carriers. The risk of transmission from someone who is not sick but is carrying the bacteria is low.
- NOTE: The bacteria that cause Strep Throat also can cause Impetigo.

How is it spread?

- Respiratory (droplet) route: Contact with large droplets that form when a child talks, coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land on or be rubbed into the eyes, nose, or mouth. The droplets do not stay in the air, they usually travel no more than 3 feet and fall onto the ground.
- Contact with the respiratory secretions from or objects contaminated by children who carry Strep bacteria. Close contact helps the spread of the infection.

What is the treatment?

- Your physician will confirm Strep Throat by a throat culture. There are two types of cultures: A Rapid Strep Test (with results in 5-20 minutes) or the more sensitive test is a culture that is read 24 hours later.
- An antibiotic is prescribed for at least 7-10 days. It is very important that your child takes the entire course of medication. Do not stop the medication because your child appears well and/or is fever free continue the medication as directed.
- Your physician will advise you about pain/fever reducing medication. Give plenty of liquids. A child with Strep Throat needs plenty of rest; encourage quiet activities.
- You and your child should wash your hands frequently, especially after coughing, sneezing, or using tissues.
- Do not share drinking glasses, eating utensils, etc. The use of disposable paper cups may be helpful the first 24 hours to remind children not to share cups.

Additional Information

- Please report an episode of confirmed Strep Throat to the nurse's office as soon as possible. Please contact us even if your child developed Strep Throat on a non-school day (weekend, holiday, vacation).
- Consult your physician if your child's condition is not improving.
- Some children who have Strep Throat/Scarlet Fever may experience very dry peeling palms afterwards. This is normal.

When can my child return to school?

- A negative culture or 24 hours of antibiotics, and your child has not had a fever without the use of fever reducing medication are required before returning.
- **YOUR CHILD MAY NOT RETURN UNTIL HE/SHE IS FEVER FREE FOR AT LEAST 24 HOURS WITHOUT TAKING TYLENOL OR MOTRIN.** For example, if your child begins antibiotics at 2 pm today, (s)he may not return to school tomorrow, wait until the following school day.