

Women's Health

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Did You Know?

Virtually every child and adult will get a **sore throat** at least once or twice each year. What should you do when this happens? Could it be strep throat? How can you tell? Do you need to go to the doctor right away?

Following is information to answer these questions and to help you decide what kind of medical care you need:

CAUSES

- **Viruses:** By far, the most common cause of sore throat is one of a large number of viruses, none of which are treatable with antibiotics. These viruses can cause high fever and a sore throat that is equally as painful as the sore throat that comes from a strep infection.
- **Cold and coughs:** The common cold virus can cause a sore throat in addition to its many other symptoms. The coughing and post nasal drip often associated with a cold can also irritate the throat.
- **Strep throat:** Is caused by the streptococcus bacteria and is treated with antibiotics.
- **Allergies:** Do not usually cause a sudden sore throat, however, they can cause a chronic throat irritation and pain.

SYMPTOMS OF STREP THROAT

- Fever is very common with strep throat. A fever over 101 degrees for more than three days is more likely to be associated with a strep throat infection.
- A very red throat with white pus on the tonsils.
- Swollen neck glands.
- A sore throat in the fall or winter months, when strep infections most commonly occur.
- No other symptoms other than fever and sore throat. Strep throat usually does not cause multiple symptoms such as runny nose, cough, and congestion.
- Headache, nausea, and vomiting can, however, occur with strep.
- There is a characteristic rash that sometimes occurs with strep. It is a fine, red, raised rash that appears mostly over the trunk of the body. It can look almost like a sun burn and it feels rough.

WHEN SHOULD I GO TO WOMEN'S HEALTH?

Now that you know the symptoms of strep throat you do not need to rush to the doctor at the first sign of a sore throat. Wait a day or two to see the direction the illness is taking. If your symptoms begin to fit the picture of a strep infection given above then you should see a health professional. *In the mean time...*

AT HOME TREATMENTS

- **Pain relievers - Regular** dosing of Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen can help significantly. You can use both together for extreme pain. Always follow the directions for dosing on the packaging of the medicine and remember that Ibuprofen should be taken with food.
- **Anesthetic throat lozenges or gargle** - Chloraseptic is an over-the-counter brand that works well.
- **Warm salt water gargle** - Mix 1 teaspoon of salt in 8 ounces of warm water. This is an old recipe that works great!
- **Tea** - Some herbal teas with honey or lemon may help.

If you think that your sore throat fits with the signs of strep throat given above or if your throat pain persists more than one week you should seek medical attention. If the medical practitioner agrees that it could be a strep infection it is common for them to do a rapid strep test from a swab of the throat to confirm the diagnosis. Persistent redness and swelling of the throat and neck glands, despite a negative strep test, could indicate the need for further blood tests to rule out mononucleosis, a serious viral throat infection.

The nursing staff in Women's Health is available by appointment to assess students with symptoms of strep throat. Rapid strep tests can be done when needed for a minimal charge.