

Sore Throats

Throat infections (pharyngitis, tonsillitis) are painful and make all of us miserable at one time or another. Two types of germs cause throat infections - VIRUSES and BACTERIA. The most important bacteria infecting the throat is the streptococcus (strep throat).

The majority of throat infections in children are caused by viruses and are not "strep." Unfortunately, the symptoms and severity of viral and strep throats are so similar that we often cannot accurately tell one from another by examination. It is important to treat strep throats with antibiotics because treatment prevents the occasional late complication - rheumatic fever with rheumatic heart disease. We use throat cultures and a rapid strep test to identify strep throats. For children with sore throat, we suggest obtaining a throat culture or a rapid strep test through a physician appointment. The results of the rapid strep test are usually available within twenty minutes and routine throat culture results are available in 24 - 48 hours. If the culture proves positive, you will be contacted and antibiotics can be prescribed. A child with "strep" is considered contagious to others until he has been on antibiotics for at least 24 hours. After that period your child may return to his usual activities if he feels well. We recommend that other family member be tested (by their primary care physician) if they are symptomatic.

Remember:

- * A rapid strep or throat culture is a simple, quick way to identify those children with sore throats that need antibiotics.
- * Children with "strep" should also be isolated from others for 24 hours after the start of therapy.
- * Family contacts should be tested by their physician if symptomatic.
- * General treatment measures include: frequent liquids, gargles, sprays, lozenges, Tylenol and time.