



STREP THROAT (ADULTS)

What is strep throat?

Strep throat is an infection caused by a certain type of bacteria. It leads to a sore throat.

Most sore throats are caused by a virus, and are not strep throat. Only about 1 in 10 adults who seek medical care for sore throat have strep throat. But if you do have strep throat, you will need treatment with antibiotics.

How can I tell if I have strep throat?

It is hard to tell the difference between strep throat and a sore throat caused by a virus. But there are some clues that you can look for.

People who have strep throat often have:

- Severe throat pain
- Fever (temperature higher than 100.4°F or 38°C)
- Swollen glands in the neck



You might also be able to see redness on the roof of your mouth, or white patches in the back of your throat. People who have strep throat usually **do not** have a cough, runny nose, or itchy or red eyes. These symptoms are more common when the sore throat is caused by a virus.

Is there a test for strep throat?

Yes. If you think you might have strep throat, a doctor or nurse can easily check for it. They can run a swab along the back of your throat, and test it for the bacteria that cause strep throat.

Do I need antibiotics?

Yes. If a test shows that you have strep throat, then you will need antibiotics. Antibiotics can help reduce your symptoms and keep the infection from spreading to other people as easily.

Antibiotics can also prevent problems that strep throat can sometimes cause. These can happen if:

- The body reacts to the infection – this can cause symptoms like skin rash, joint pain, and even organ damage. In some cases, this can be serious.
- The bacteria spread to nearby areas – for example, this could cause an ear, sinus, or skin infection. It could also cause swelling or abscesses (pockets of pus) in the throat.

You will probably be prescribed antibiotics to take for 10 days. It's important to take all of your antibiotics, even if you start to feel better sooner.

What can I do to feel better?

Follow your doctor's instructions for taking your antibiotics.

There are also other ways to help relieve symptoms:

- Take over-the-counter pain medicine – acetaminophen (sample brand name: Tylenol) or ibuprofen (sample brand names: Advil, Motrin) can help with throat pain.
- Use sore throat lozenges or sprays – using medicated sore throat lozenges or throat sprays can temporarily reduce throat pain.
- Suck on hard candies, ice chips, or ice pops.
- Gargle with salt water – some people find that this helps with throat pain.
- Use a cool mist humidifier – this adds moisture to the air to keep the throat from getting too dry and might help with pain.
- Avoid smoking or being around people who are smoking – smoke can make throat pain worse.

What problems should I watch for?

If strep throat is not treated with antibiotics, it can lead to other problems.

Call your doctor or nurse for advice if:

- You are having trouble getting enough to eat or drink.
- You still have symptoms after you finish your antibiotics.
- You develop a red rash or peeling skin.
- You develop joint pain within one month of having strep throat.
- Your urine becomes red or brown.
- You start having new symptoms.



What can I do to prevent getting strep throat again?

Wash your hands often with soap and water. This is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of infection.

When can I go back to work or school?

Doctors, usually recommend waiting 1 day after starting antibiotics before returning to work or school. By then, you will be a lot less likely to spread the infection to others.