

Strep Throat

Strep throat and scarlet fever (strep throat with a rash) are caused by bacterium group A streptococcus. This organism is spread by contact with secretions from the mouth and nose of infected persons. The incubation period is usually between two and five days. Children are contagious (able to spread the disease) until 24 hours after antibiotic treatment is begun.

Signs and symptoms include sore throat, fever, swollen glands below the jaw and in the neck, and pus on the tonsils. Sometimes there is a fine, red, sandpapery rash. Vomiting, headache and stomach pain may also occur.

If you suspect strep throat, keep your child at home and contact your physician, who will perform a throat culture to determine whether the streptococcal bacterium is present. If the diagnosis is strep throat, your child will be given an antibiotic. To prevent more serious disease (such as rheumatic fever), your child must take all the medication as prescribed, even if the symptoms are gone and your child is feeling well.