

**You are being provided with this fact sheet:**

- because you or your child may have been exposed to strep throat.** If you believe your child has developed strep throat, contact your health care provider. Notify your child care provider or preschool if a diagnosis of strep throat is made.
  
  - for informational purposes only.**
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**What causes strep throat and scarlet fever?**

Both strep throat and scarlet fever are illnesses caused by group A streptococcal bacteria. These bacteria are often found in the throat and on the skin of humans. Some people may carry these bacteria in their throat or on the skin and have no symptoms of illness.

**What are the symptoms of strep throat and scarlet fever?**

Symptoms of illness appear 2 to 5 days after an individual is exposed to the bacteria. Strep throat usually brings on sudden fever\*, sore throat, pain with swallowing, swollen tonsils, and swollen lymph nodes in the neck and throat areas. However, it is common for children under the age of 3 to not have sore throat as a symptom.

Scarlet fever presents as a sandpaper-like rash that sometimes occurs in people that have strep throat. The rash generally first appears as tiny red bumps on the chest and abdomen and may spread to other parts of the body, but not the face, palms, or soles of feet. The rash is usually worse in certain areas such as under the arm, in the groin, or in the elbow. The rash may last for 7 days. A fever of 101°F or higher is also common. Symptoms may also include nausea, vomiting and headache.

**How are strep throat and scarlet fever spread?**

These bacteria are spread through direct contact with infectious droplets from the nose or throat of persons who are infected. Both illnesses are usually spread from person to person by coughing or direct contact with someone who has the bacteria. Crowded conditions, such as those found in child care settings and schools, often lead to disease spread. Casual contact rarely leads to illness. The best way to keep from getting sick is to wash your hands often, and for people who are sick to cover their coughs and sneezes appropriately.

**Who is at risk for getting strep throat or scarlet fever?**

Strep throat occurs at all ages but it is most common in school-aged children and teens. Scarlet fever is usually seen in children ages 5-15, and rarely under the age of 3.

**How is strep throat or scarlet fever diagnosed?**

Diagnosis of streptococcal infections is done through laboratory testing.

**How are strep throat and scarlet fever treated?**

Both illnesses are treated with antibiotics.

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**Child Care Health Outreach Program**

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**How is the spread of strep throat or scarlet fever reduced?**

- Prompt identification and treatment of strep infections helps reduce further infections and possible complications.
- People who have these illnesses should avoid direct or close contact with others.
- Dispose of facial tissues properly and teach children to cover their mouth and nose when they cough or sneeze.
- Use a sanitizing solution to help minimize germs on surfaces such as tabletops, counters, and toys. A disinfectant is appropriate to use on high-touch surfaces that will not be mouthed by children.
- Good handwashing practices and the practice of good respiratory etiquette by those who are infected will also help to reduce further infections.

**Exclude from group setting?**

Children with strep throat or scarlet fever should not return to school or child care until *at least* 12 hours after beginning antibiotics AND fever is resolved.

\* Fever is defined as a temperature above 101°F (38.3°C) by any method or above 100.4°F (38.0°C) for infants younger than 2 months old.

**References:**

*American Academy of Pediatrics*

- Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools, 4<sup>th</sup> ed.

*American Academy of Pediatrics*

- Red Book: 2018-2021 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases, 31<sup>st</sup> ed.

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

- Group A Streptococcal Disease. Accessed December 2020.

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