

STREP THROAT & SCARLET FEVER - FACT SHEET

CAUSE and DEFINITION:

- Strep throat and scarlet fever are both caused by Group A Streptococcus bacteria
- Children with scarlet fever have a fine “sandpaper” feeling red rash, but are not any sicker than children with strep throat who do not have the rash.
- A throat culture (or rapid strep test) is necessary to be certain of the diagnosis of strep throat.
- About 5-10% of people carry Strep in their nose and throat all the time and are not ill
- During outbreaks, up to half of children without illness may have Strep in their throat cultures.
- If untreated, most children and adults get better on their own. Some develop another infection (ear infection, sinusitis, abscess of the tonsils). Rheumatic heart disease or kidney complications are rare, but possible, after a Strep infection.

CHARACTERISTICS:

Strep Throat

- Sore throat
- Fever
- Stomachache / Decreased appetite
- Swollen lymph nodes in neck
- [sometimes can be distinguished from a cold; With strep, less likely to have runny nose, cough, and congestion]

Scarlet Fever

- Above symptoms may be present, or scarlet fever can be associated with a streptococcal infection in a part of the body that is not the throat.
- Rash feels like fine sandpaper.
- Rash may be most prominent in armpits, groin area, creases in bend of elbow and knees

INCUBATION / CONTAGION

- Once infected, it takes 2-5 days to get symptoms
- Although during outbreaks, up to half of people without illness may have Strep in their throat cultures, they are not likely to spread the infection and are not considered contagious.
- Once started on antibiotics, risk of contagion is minimal for those who are ill.

MODE OF TRANSMISSION & CONTROL

- Spread by direct contact with nose and throat fluids
- Spread by respiratory droplets that are passed by coughing and sneezing
- Close contact helps spread the infection.

HOME MANAGEMENT

- Contact your child’s physician for diagnosis and treatment.
- Good hand washing hygiene and cough etiquette (cough in elbow)
- Children diagnosed with Strep may return to school once they have been on antibiotics for 24 hours, and if they are able to participate in school activities.