

STREP THROAT / SCARLET FEVER

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Strep Throat? Scarlet Fever?

Strep Throat is a sore throat caused by streptococcal bacteria. It is important to diagnose and treat Strep Throat with an antibiotic because significant problems may result if left untreated. Strep Throat can occur at any age, but is most common in school age children. It can occur year round, but peaks in late winter and early spring. **Scarlet Fever** is also caused by streptococcal bacteria and is characterized by a skin rash. A fine red rash appears most often on the neck, chest, under arms, elbows, groin, and on the inner surfaces of the thighs. The rash feels like sandpaper. In addition to the rash, a person with Scarlet Fever may have the same symptoms as a strep throat.

How is it spread?

The germs that cause Strep Throat are spread through tiny droplets in the air from sneezing and coughing. It is rarely spread by indirect contact with objects. The incubation period is usually 1-3 days. If the disease is left untreated, infected persons can be contagious for 10-21 days or longer. Casual contact rarely leads to infection.

How is it treated?

A throat culture or strep test is needed to accurately diagnose a Strep Throat. Strep Throat and Scarlet Fever are treated with antibiotics (the use of penicillin is most common). It is very important to complete antibiotic therapy as recommended. Untreated or inadequately treated Streptococcal infections can lead to serious complications such as kidney disease, Rheumatic Fever, or throat abscesses.

How can we prevent Strep Throat?

- ▶ Wash hands frequently.
- ▶ Cough or sneeze into tissue. Dispose of tissue properly. The use of handkerchiefs is not recommended.
- ▶ After using a tissue for a cough or sneeze, wash your hands.
- ▶ Exclude persons known to have a strep infection from school or child care until 24 hours after beginning medication.

SYMPTOMS OF STREP THROAT

- ▶ Sudden onset of a fever and sore throat with a reddened tonsil area
- ▶ Painful swallowing
- ▶ Swollen and tender lymph nodes on neck
- ▶ Ear pain
- ▶ Skin rash in the presence of the above symptoms may indicate Scarlet Fever

DICKINSON-IRON DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

www.didhd.org



**818 Pyle Drive
Kingsford, MI 49802
(906) 774 1868**

**601 Washington Avenue
Iron River, MI 49935
(906) 265 9913**