

Viral Sore Throat (Pharyngitis, non-Strep)

by Robert S. Gillespie, MD, MPH - Pediatrician

It's not strep?

Most sore throats come from viruses, not streptococcal (“strep”) infections. Many different cold and flu viruses can cause a sore throat. However, it is hard even for doctors to tell if it's a strep infection just by looking at the throat. That is why doctors usually do a strep test on sore throats. A rapid strep test can be done in the doctor's office in a few minutes. It is about 95% accurate. If the test is negative, your doctor may want to send it to a lab for confirmation.

Does my child need antibiotics?

No. Your child only needs antibiotics when the throat is infected with strep. Antibiotics **do not help at all** when a virus causes the sore throat.

What can I do for the soreness?

The only treatment for viral sore throats is to help your child stay comfortable. The sore throat will gradually go away by itself.

Medicines

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is excellent for both pain *and* fever.
- You can also use ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) if the sore throat is not from a strep infection. Do **not** use ibuprofen with a strep infection – this may increase the risk of complications.
- Children 2 years and older can take a mixture of Maalox and Benadryl to coat and soothe the throat. They can take it every 2 hours, as needed. The doses are:

2 through 5 years	½ teaspoon Maalox mixed with ¼ teaspoon Benadryl
6 through 11 years	1 teaspoon Maalox mixed with ½ teaspoon Benadryl
12 years and older	2 teaspoons Maalox mixed with 1 teaspoon Benadryl

Other Treatments

These treatments also help soothe the throat:

- Hard candies
- Cough drops
- Throat sprays
- Popsicles
- Milkshakes or soft ice cream
- Gargling with warm salt water (¼ teaspoon salt in 8 ounces of warm, not hot, water)
- Drinking warm liquids such as broth or herbal teas (be sure they are warm, not hot)
 - Don't give drinks with caffeine, such as coffee or regular tea, to young children

Use whichever methods your child prefers. These treatments are only for comfort. So don't force your child to use a treatment if he doesn't like it.

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Can other people get the infection?

Yes. Viruses are contagious. That means other people can catch them. Viruses spread mainly through contact with tiny drops of fluid from the mouth or nose of an infected person. So be sure to wash your hands carefully or use a hand sanitizer gel when you are around anyone with a sore throat. Don't kiss. Don't share food, glasses, silverware or toothbrushes.

When should I call the doctor?

- When someone first develops a sore throat, call so he or she can be checked for strep.
- Call if you have any other questions or concerns.
- Be sure to call *immediately* if:
 - Your child cannot swallow, or is drooling.
 - Your child seems very sick.
 - Your child has trouble breathing.



Strep Throat (Streptococcal Pharyngitis)

by Robert S. Gillespie, MD, MPH - Pediatrician

What is strep throat?

Strep is short for “Streptococcus,” a type of bacteria. Strep throat is a very common infection in children and adults. Patients often have other symptoms such as runny nose, fever, headache or cough.

Does my child need antibiotics?

Yes. Strep is a type of bacteria, and antibiotics will kill the bacteria. Be sure your child takes **all** of the prescription, even if he is feeling better. The antibiotic prevents a serious disease called rheumatic fever and other complications from strep infection. Most antibiotics are very effective in killing the type of strep that causes strep throat.

What can I do for the soreness?

Medicines

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is excellent for both pain *and* fever.
- Do **not** use ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) with a strep infection – this may increase the risk of complications.
- Children 2 years and older can take a mixture of Maalox and Benadryl to coat and soothe the throat. They can take it every 2 hours, as needed. The doses are:

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- Drinking warm liquids such as broth or herbal teas (be sure they are warm, not hot)
 - Don’t give drinks with caffeine, such as coffee or regular tea, to young children

Use whichever methods your child prefers. These treatments are only for comfort. So don’t force your child to use a treatment if he doesn’t like it. Just be sure your child takes the antibiotic.

(continued)

Can other people get the infection?

Yes. Strep spreads mainly through contact with tiny drops of fluid from the mouth or nose of an infected person. So be sure to wash your hands or use a hand sanitizer gel when you are around anyone with a sore throat. Don't kiss. Don't share food, glasses, silverware or toothbrushes. If other people develop a sore throat, they should see their doctor to be tested for strep.

When can my child go back to school?

Your child is not contagious after he has taken the antibiotic for 24 hours. After that, he can go back to school, if he feels okay.

When should I call the doctor?

- When someone first develops a sore throat, call so he or she can be checked for strep.
- Call if you have any questions or concerns.
- If you are having trouble getting your child to take the antibiotic.
- Be sure to call *immediately* if:
 - Your child cannot swallow, or is drooling.
 - Your child seems very sick.
 - Your child has trouble breathing.

