

Parent Resources

Caring for a Child Who Has Strep Throat

Strep throat is the second most common reason children get antibiotics. Strep is a common, contagious infection that could have very serious consequences if not treated. School staff pay close attention if any child has symptoms of strep throat. The infection is caused by bacteria called group A streptococcus. The illness is more common in children than adults, but anyone can get it.

Symptoms of Strep Throat

- Fever (usually greater than 101 F)
- Strawberry-like appearance to the tongue
- Bad-smelling breath
- Abdominal pain, sometimes with vomiting
- Irritability or fussiness
- Red, swollen tonsils (sometimes with white patches)
- Illness comes on rapidly
- Severe sore throat
- Swollen glands in the neck
- Headache
- Poor appetite
- Sleeping more than usual

How is the infection spread? How is it treated?

Strep throat is easily spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes contaminated droplets into the air and another person inhales them. Other people can also become infected from touching these secretions (on toys, cups and other surfaces) and then touching their mouth or nose.

If your child is diagnosed with strep throat, please have him/her take all prescribed medications as directed (even if your child is feeling better). Taking the entire antibiotic will ensure that the infection is gone. It is also important to replace your child's toothbrush after completing treatment for illnesses such as strep throat. Studies have shown that toothbrushes can harbor illness-causing bacteria.

As your child begins to heal, talk to his/her doctor about the best time to return to school and other routine activities. According to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, children diagnosed with strep throat should be free of fever and on antibiotics for at least 24 hours before returning to school. Your child should be feeling better within a few days with proper medical care, enough rest and plenty of fluids.

If the infection is left untreated or incompletely treated (antibiotics are not finished), serious illness could develop causing heart disease, rheumatic fever and/or kidney problems.

How can strep throat be prevented?

Cover your mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing. Careful hand washing, especially after coughing or sneezing, is very important. Cleaning your hands properly is the best way to prevent all kinds of infections. Avoid sharing eating utensils, drinking glasses, napkins, handkerchiefs or towels with other family members. Strep throat is a serious infection for schools to deal with because it can affect so many people. It can spread easily at work, home or (especially) school. Please notify your child's school when a diagnosis of strep throat has been made so that the school nurse can track the infection's occurrence.



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
P.O. Box 480; Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480 • Phone: (573) 751-4427

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. Inquiries related to Department programs and to the location of services, activities, and facilities that are accessible by persons with disabilities may be directed to the Jefferson State Office Building, Civil Rights Compliance (Title VI/Title IX/504/ADA/Age Act), 5th Floor, 205 Jefferson Street, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; telephone number 573-526-4757 or Relay Missouri 800-735-2966. Information concerning other available resources, programs, etc., is not to be construed as an endorsement by Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled for any specific product, organization or philosophy.