

Strep throat is a contagious disease caused by a bacterium named beta-hemolytic streptococcus, group A, or “strep” for short. The incubation period is usually 1-3 days.

## Information About Strep Throat:

1. Symptoms and signs include sore throat (usually severe), fever, headache, very red throat, and large, tender lymph glands under the angle of the jaw. A fine red rash is occasionally present. (If the rash is present, it’s called scarlet fever). Cold symptoms (congested nose, hoarseness, cough) are usually absent.

Because so many germs (especially the ones that cause virus colds or “mono”) can also cause a sore throat, this problem cannot be handled over the phone and requires an office visit.

2. Lab work is essential in confirming the diagnosis. A throat culture needs to be done. Your clinician may order some blood work, also.
3. Diagnosis is completed when a sore throat and a positive throat culture are present.
4. Treatment consists of a 10-day course of penicillin completely taken. If there is a penicillin allergy, other antibiotics, especially erythromycin, can be used.

Throat lozenges, Tylenol, and salt water (or mouthwash) gargles may be used as well.

5. Contagion: The period of communicability starts a day or so before symptoms begin and continues for 1-2 days after antibiotic treatment is started. In untreated cases, communicability often lasts 10-21 days.

Strep throat is usually transmitted by direct or indirect contact with patients or carriers. It is important to take the antibiotic faithfully for the full 10 days as it shortens the contagious period, usually shortens the illness (to 2 or 3 days after the antibiotic is started), and lessens the chances of getting rare complications of strep infections that involve the heart (rheumatic fever) or kidneys (acute glomerulonephritis).

