

STREPTOCOCCAL INFECTION

→ Childcare and preschools use these pages, schools use pages 234-235

Streptococcal sore throat (strep throat), a strep throat with a rash (scarlet fever), and inflammation of the skin and/or tissues under the skin around the anal area (perianal cellulitis) are common infections in young children.

CAUSE: *Streptococcus* bacteria (Group A beta-hemolytic strep).

SYMPTOMS: **Strep throat:** Starts suddenly with fever, red sore throat, and swollen glands. Headache may occur. Nausea, abdominal pain, and vomiting may be more common in children.

Scarlet fever: A very fine raised rash (feels like sandpaper) is present. The rash blanches with pressure. The rash appears most often on the neck, chest, in folds of the armpit, elbow, groin, and in the inner thigh. Later on, there may be peeling of the skin on the fingertips and toes.

Perianal cellulitis: The skin around the anus is painful, red, and tender. It may blister and scab over. Fever and chills may also be present. The perianal area may itch and the child may have painful bowel movements.

These illnesses are usually not serious; however, rare problems such as rheumatic fever (which can damage heart valves) or kidney disease may develop if children do not receive proper antibiotic treatment.

SPREAD: When a person with a Group A strep infection coughs or sneezes tiny droplets with strep bacteria into the air and another person breathes them in. People can also get infected by touching objects or the hands of someone with perianal strep after the infected person touches or itches the anal area. Casual contact rarely results in spread.

INCUBATION: It usually takes 2 to 5 days from the time a person is exposed until symptoms start.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD: Until 24 hours after antibiotic treatment begins.

EXCLUSION: Until 24 hours after antibiotic treatment begins and until the child is without fever.

Children without symptoms, regardless of a positive throat culture, do not need to be excluded from childcare. Person who have strep bacteria in their throats and do not have any symptoms (carriers) appear to be at little risk of spreading infection to those who live, go to childcare or school, or work around them.

DIAGNOSIS: Call your healthcare provider. They may confirm the identification of strep in the throat, either by throat culture or by using a rapid strep test, which can provide results the same day. For perianal cellulitis, blood cultures or cultures of the anal area may be necessary to confirm the diagnosis.

TREATMENT: If the throat culture or rapid strep test is positive, your healthcare provider may give you a penicillin shot or antibiotics that are taken by mouth. Antibiotics should be taken for the prescribed amount of time. DO NOT stop the antibiotics early, even when the child feels better. Treatment may be dependent on how severe the infection is and will help prevent more serious illness such as rheumatic fever.

STREPTOCOCCAL INFECTIONS

PREVENTION/CONTROL:

1. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with secretions from the nose or mouth. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.**
2. Cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing or cough/sneeze into your sleeve.
3. Dispose of used tissues.
4. Clean and disinfect mouthed toys at least daily and when soiled.
5. If your child develops a sore throat and other symptoms listed above, keep the child home and call your healthcare provider.

For more information, you or your healthcare provider may call Hennepin County Community Health Department at (952) 351-5230, or call your local health department.