

PARENT ALERT

Contagious disease exposure in room _____ on _____.

STREPTOCOCCAL INFECTION (Strep Throat and Scarlet Fever)

WHAT IS STREP THROAT? A disease caused by group A Streptococcus bacteria

WHAT IS SCARLET FEVER?

- A fine red rash that makes the skin feel like sandpaper. Scarlet fever is caused by a toxin produced by a strep infection of the throat or another area of the body. The rash is usually quite prominent in the armpits and groin area, often making the creases in the bend of the elbow and back of the knee pinker than usual. Sometimes, the area around the mouth has a pale appearance.
- Children who have scarlet fever are generally not any sicker than children with strep throat who do not have the rash.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS & SYMPTOMS?

- Some of the following symptoms may be present:
 - Sore throat
 - Fever
 - Stomachache
 - Headache
 - Swollen lymph nodes in neck
 - Decreased appetite
- Strep throat is much less likely if there is
 - Cough
 - Congestion
 - Runny nose
- Children younger than 3 years with group A streptococcal infection rarely have a sore throat. Most commonly, these children have a persistent nasal discharge (which may be associated with a foul odor from the mouth), fever, irritability, and loss of appetite.

HOW CAN YOU CATCH IT?

- Respiratory (droplet) route: Contact with large droplets that form when a child talks, coughs, or sneezes. These droplets can land on or be rubbed into the eyes, nose, or mouth. The droplets do not stay in the air; they usually travel no more than 3 feet and fall onto the ground.
- Contact with the respiratory secretions from or objects contaminated by children who carry strep bacteria.
- Close contact helps the spread of the infection.

WHEN CAN YOU CATCH IT?

- Incubation period: 2 to 5 days.
- Contagious period: The risk of spread is reduced when a person who is ill with strep throat is treated with antibiotics. Up to 25% of asymptomatic school children and a small number

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of adults carry the bacteria that cause strep throat in their nose and throat and are not ill. In outbreaks, a higher proportion of children with no symptoms of illness may be carriers. The risk of transmission from someone who is not sick but is carrying the bacteria is low.

WHAT ARE POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS? (Usually none, but)

- Some who are not treated develop complications, including ear infections, sinusitis, abscesses in the tonsils, or infection of the lymph nodes (i.e., tender and warm swollen glands). Indications for testing include a sudden development of sore throat, fever, headache, pain on swallowing, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, and enlarged, tender lymph nodes in the front part of the neck without a runny nose.
- A rare but very serious complication of strep throat is the development of rheumatic heart disease, a condition that affects the valves and function of the heart. Children younger than 3 years are very unlikely to get strep throat infection or develop rheumatic heart disease. Therefore, testing these younger children is generally not recommended, especially if they show signs of a viral illness like runny nose or cough.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

- Seek advice and treatment from a medical professional and contact childcare/preschool if Strep/Scarlet Fever are confirmed.
- See that child gets adequate rest to avoid complications.
- Seek medical attention if stiff joints, red hard skin areas or shortness of breath occur
- Complete the full course of medicine (usually antibiotics) as prescribed.
- Wash hands frequently.

WHAT WILL THE STAFF DO?

- Exclude sick child.
- Alerts possibly exposed family and staff members to watch for symptoms.
- Ventilate and air out classroom.
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys
- Practice meticulous handwashing.

EXCLUDE FROM GROUP SETTING?

- **Yes.**

WHEN CAN THE CHILD RETURN TO CLASS?

- At least the first 12 hours of antibiotic treatment has been given.

AND

- The child can participate, and staff members determine they can care for the child without compromising their ability to care for the health and safety of the other children in the group.

If you have any questions, please contact your childcare center and healthcare provider.

Adapted from Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools: A Quick Reference Guide 4th ed. 2020