

Tonsil Infection - Strep

Definition

- A bacterial infection of the tonsils caused by Strep
- Also called Strep tonsillitis

Health Information

Symptoms

- The tonsils are lymph glands in the back of the throat. They stand guard on each side of the throat. Usually they are the size of a small cherry.
- Pain, discomfort or raw feeling of the throat
- Pain is made worse when swallows
- Other symptoms include sore throat, fever, and swollen lymph nodes in the neck. General symptoms include headache, stomach pain, nausea and vomiting.
- Cough, hoarseness, red eyes, and runny nose are not seen with Strep throat. These symptoms point more to a viral cause.
- Scarlet fever rash (fine, red, sandpaper-like rash) is highly suggestive of Strep throat.
- If you look at the throat with a light, it will be bright red. The tonsil will be red and swollen, often covered with pus.
- Peak age: 5 to 15 years old. Not common under 2 years old unless sibling has Strep.

Tonsil Size

- Grade 1 - Can barely see the tonsil
- Grade 2 - Small tonsil
- Grade 3 - Tonsil half way to the midline
- Grade 4 - Tonsils are touching (called kissing tonsils)

Cause

- Group A Strep is the only common bacterial cause of a throat infection. (called Strep pharyngitis).
- Any infection of the throat usually also involves the tonsils. (called Strep tonsillitis)
- Strep accounts for 20% of sore throats with fever.

Diagnosis

- Diagnosis can be confirmed by a Strep test on a sample of throat secretions.
- There is no risk to wait until a Strep test can be done.
- If your child has cold symptoms too, a Strep test is not needed.

Prevention of Spread to Others

- Good hand washing can prevent spread of infection.

Care Advice

1. **Overview:**
 - Strep causes 20% of throat and tonsil infections in school age children.
 - Viral infections cause the rest.
 - Strep tonsillitis is easy to treat with an antibiotic.
 - Complications are rare.
 - Here is some care advice that should help.
2. **Antibiotic by Mouth:**
 - Strep infections need a prescription for an antibiotic.
 - The antibiotic will kill the bacteria that are causing the Strep tonsil infection.
 - Give the antibiotic as directed.
 - Try not to forget any of the doses.
 - Give the antibiotic until it is gone. Reason: To stop the Strep infection from flaring up again.
3. **Sore Throat Pain Relief:**
 - Age over 1 year. Can sip warm fluids such as chicken broth or apple juice. Some children prefer cold foods such as popsicles or ice cream.
 - Age over 6 years. Can also suck on hard candy or lollipops. Butterscotch seems to help.
 - Age over 8 years. Can also gargle. Use warm water with a little table salt added. A liquid antacid can be added instead of salt. Use Mylanta or the store brand. No prescription is needed.
 - Medicated throat sprays or lozenges are generally not helpful.
4. **Pain Medicine:**
 - To help with the pain, give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Use as needed.
5. **Fever:**
 - For fevers above 102° F (39° C), give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Note: Lower fevers are important for fighting infections.
 - For ALL fevers: Keep your child well hydrated. Give lots of cold fluids.
6. **Fluids and Soft Diet:**
 - Try to get your child to drink adequate fluids.
 - Goal: Keep your child well hydrated.
 - Cold drinks, milk shakes, popsicles, slushes, and sherbet are good choices.
 - **Solids.** Offer a soft diet. Also avoid foods that need much chewing. Avoid citrus, salty, or spicy foods. Note: Fluid intake is much more important than eating any solids.
 - Swollen tonsils can make some solid foods hard to swallow. Cut food into smaller pieces.
7. **What to Expect:**
 - Strep throat responds quickly to antibiotics.
 - The fever is usually gone by 24 hours.
 - The sore throat starts to feel better by 48 hours.
8. **Return to School:**
 - Your child can return to school after the fever is gone.
 - Your child should feel well enough to join in normal activities.
 - Children with Strep throat need to be taking an antibiotic for at least 12 hours.

Call Your Doctor If

- Trouble breathing or drooling occurs
- Fever lasts more than 3 days
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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