

STREP THROAT/SCARLET FEVER

What are they?

Strep throat and scarlet fever are infections caused by Group A Streptococcus bacteria. The infections are more common in children than in adults. Strep throat is a throat infection that can develop into scarlet fever.

What are the symptoms?

Individuals with strep throat may have a fever and complain of a very sore throat, headache, and stomach ache. The throat is often red, but can have white or yellow patches on it. The glands of the neck may be swollen as well and appetite is decreased. Strep throat is much less likely if there is a runny nose, cough, and congestion.

Scarlet fever starts with a sore throat, fever, and swollen neck glands. This is followed by a fine red rash that makes the skin feel like sandpaper (you can often feel the rash easier than you can see it.) The rash usually appears on the chest and abdomen, and is more prominent in the armpits and groin areas. The cheeks may be flushed and the area around the mouth is pale. The tongue is often bright red and pitted like a strawberry. People with severe disease will have a high fever, nausea, and vomiting.

When the person begins to feel better, the skin on the tips of the fingers and toes may come off. Sometimes the skin will peel from the trunk and limbs.

How is it spread?

Strep throat and scarlet fever is spread through secretions from the nose and mouth of an infected person, usually through coughing and sneezing. The time from exposure to the bacteria and to developing illness is two to five days.

What can I do about it?

Hand washing is always an important way to prevent the spread of any infection, including strep throat and scarlet fever. Cover your coughs and sneezes.

See your doctor if you have a fever and sore throat that lasts more than 24 hours, swollen neck glands, and/or a rash. The doctor can treat strep throat and scarlet fever with antibiotics, usually penicillin. After 1 to 2 days of treatment, the disease will not be spread to others. If your child attends school/day nursery, they should not return until antibiotic treatment has been taken for at least one full day.

For more information, call KFL&A Public Health at 613-549-1232 or 1-800-267-7875, ext. 1287.

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