

Strep Throat (Scarlet Fever)



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Communicable Disease Division
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Date:

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your child may have recently been exposed to **strep throat or scarlet fever**. Strep throat and scarlet fever (strep throat with a rash) are caused by streptococcus bacteria.

What are the symptoms of strep throat and scarlet fever?

Symptoms may include sore throat, fever, headache, swollen lymph nodes in neck and decreased appetite. Scarlet fever is a sandpaper-like rash that sometimes occurs in people that have strep throat. The rash is usually more prominent in the armpits and groin area. Children younger than three years with strep throat rarely have a sore throat. Most commonly, these children have a persistent nasal discharge, fever, irritability, and loss of appetite.

How is strep throat and scarlet fever spread?

Streptococcus bacteria are spread through direct contact with respiratory secretions from the nose or throat of persons who are infected. This could be person-to-person through coughing or sneezing or by sharing drinking glasses or eating utensils with someone who is infected.

How is strep throat and scarlet fever diagnosed and treated?

A health care provider makes a diagnosis of strep throat with a throat swab and test. Both illnesses are treated with antibiotics.

How do you control the spread?

- Washing hands frequently and thoroughly, especially after touching nose or throat secretions.
- Avoid sharing personal items that may be contaminated with saliva, such as drinking cups and eating utensils.
- Use a sanitizing solution on shared toys and other potentially contaminated items.
- Cover mouth with tissue or arm when coughing or sneezing.
- Properly dispose of tissues containing nose and throat secretions.
- Children with strep throat or scarlet fever should not return to school or childcare until at least 24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment and the fever is gone.

How do I get more information?

For more information about strep throat or scarlet fever, contact your healthcare provider or Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department at (253) 798-6410 and press "0".