Strep Throat

What is Strep Throat?

Strep throat is an infection in the throat and tonsils caused by group A *Streptococcus* bacteria (called "group A strep"). This infection can cause that unpleasant, scratchy and sometimes painful condition known as a sore throat. While many sore throats will heal without treatment, strep throat generally requires antibiotic treatment.

How is it spread?

Group A strep bacteria can live in a person's nose and throat. The bacteria are spread through contact with droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze. If you drink from the same glass or eat from the same plate as the sick person, you could also become ill. It is also possible to get strep throat from contact with sores from group A strep skin infections.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The symptoms of strep throat may include: sore throat, usually starting quickly; severe pain when swallowing; a fever (101° F or above); red and swollen tonsils, sometimes with white patches or streaks of pus; tiny red spots on the area at the back of the roof of the mouth; headache; nausea and/or vomiting; swollen lymph nodes in the neck; body aches; rash.

Should a person with strep throat be isolated?

Persons with strep throat should not go to work/school until 24 hours after starting appropriate antibiotic treatment. They may return to school/work provided there is no fever.

The best way to keep from getting strep throat is to wash your hands often and avoid sharing eating utensils, like forks or cups. It is especially important for anyone with a sore throat to wash their hands often and cover their coughs and sneezes.

What type of treatment and care should be given?

A strep test (a swab of the throat) is needed to tell if you have strep throat; **just looking at your throat is not enough to make a diagnosis.** The strep test results will help the doctor decide if you need antibiotics. Antibiotics reduce the length of time you're sick, reduce your symptoms and may also prevent the spread of infection to friends and family members. Once treatment begins, you should start feeling better in just a day or two**. Be sure to finish the entire prescription**, even though you may start feeling better before the medicine is all gone.

Is there a vaccination against this disease?

No, there is no vaccine against strep throat.

Adapted from:
 "Is it Strep Throat?" Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013 (http://www.cdc.gov/features/strepthroat/, accessed 5 May 2014)