

IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

STREP THROAT/SCARLET FEVER

Group A *Streptococcus*, or group A strep, is a type of bacteria commonly found in people's throats and on their skin. Group A strep can cause a range of infections, from a sore throat, called "strep throat", to skin infections, like impetigo, and others. Scarlet fever or scarlatina is one type of infection caused by group A strep. This illness affects a small percentage of people who have a strep infection.

Symptoms

- Symptoms of strep throat include:
 - A very red, sore throat, sometimes with white patches and difficulty swallowing
 - A fever (101° F or above), often with chills, headache, and body aches
 - Nausea and/or vomiting
 - Swollen glands in the neck
- Scarlet fever can include symptoms of strep throat along with a red rash that feels rough, like sandpaper. The person may also have bright red underarm, elbow and groin skin creases.
- The tongue may have a "strawberry"-like (red and bumpy) appearance.
- The scarlet fever rash generally fades in about 7 days. As the rash fades, the skin may peel around the finger tips, toes, and groin area. This peeling can last up to several weeks.

Transmission

- Group A strep bacteria live in a person's nose and throat. The bacteria are spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes into the air. Coughing and sneezing send virus-containing droplets into the air, where they can infect people or land on objects. If you touch your mouth, nose, or eyes after touching something that has these droplets on it, you may become ill.
- If you drink from the same glass or eat from the same plate as the sick person, you could also become ill. It is possible to get scarlet fever from contact with group A strep skin infections.
- Although anyone can get scarlet fever, it usually affects children between age 5 and 18.

Treatment

- Scarlet fever is treatable with antibiotics. Since viruses and other bacteria can also cause sore throats, it's important to ask the doctor about a strep test (a simple swab of the throat) if your child complains of having a sore throat. This is important because if you or your child has strep, taking antibiotics can prevent serious complications. If the sore throat is caused by a virus, an antibiotic will do no good and can result in bacteria becoming resistant to antibiotics.
- Complications include rheumatic fever, kidney disease, ear infections, skin infections, abscesses of the throat, pneumonia, and arthritis. These can be prevented by treatment with antibiotics.

Prevention

- Wash your hands often and avoid sharing eating utensils, linens, towels or other personal items. It is especially important for anyone with a sore throat to wash his or her hands often.
- There is no vaccine to prevent strep throat or scarlet fever.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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