

# Streptococcal Sore Throat

This is a bacterial infection of the throat and tonsils caused by *Streptococcus pyogenes*.

Symptoms include:

- > fever
- > sore throat
- > tender, swollen glands in the neck.

Complications of this infection include:

## **Scarlet fever**

All the symptoms of throat infection plus a fine red rash, which first appears as tiny red bumps on the chest and abdomen. This rash may then spread all over the body. It looks like a sunburn and feels like a rough piece of sandpaper. It is usually redder in the armpits and groin areas. The rash lasts about two to five days. There is often also reddening of the tongue and the bumps on the tongue appear larger than usual, causing an appearance known as 'strawberry tongue'. After the rash is gone, often the skin on the tips of the fingers and toes begins to peel.

## **Quinsy**

An abscess (collection of pus) next to a tonsil.

## **Rheumatic fever**

A rare complication. Fever, joint pain and a skin rash develop soon after a sore throat. Later, inflammation of the heart (rheumatic carditis), or shaking and unsteadiness (Sydenham's chorea or St Vitus' dance) may occur.

## **Inflammation and reduced function of the kidney**

A rare complication.

Diagnosis is made by culture, or sometimes other tests, of a throat swab. A sore throat may also be caused by a viral infection and culture of a throat swab is the only way to distinguish between the two conditions.

Streptococci are spread by inhaling or swallowing infected airborne droplets (caused by sneezing or coughing). The droplets may contaminate hands or objects, such as drinking cups or eating utensils. Sometimes spread occurs by direct contact with infected wounds or sores on the skin. Streptococci may also be spread through consuming contaminated unpasteurised milk and milk products or other food.

## **Incubation period**

*(time between becoming infected and developing symptoms)*

1 – 3 days.

## **Infectious period**

*(time during which an infected person can infect others)*

Untreated people remain infectious for 2 – 3 weeks after becoming ill. Treated people are infectious for about 24 hours after appropriate antibiotic treatment begins.

## **Treatment**

Effective antibiotic treatment is available. To prevent potential complications, the course of antibiotics should be completed.

## **Control of spread**

- > Exclude until the person has received antibiotic treatment for at least 24 hours and feels well.
- > Cover the nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- > Always follow good hand washing procedures.
- > Dispose of soiled tissues appropriately.
- > Do not share eating utensils, food or drinking cups.
- > Do not drink unpasteurised milk.
- > People with sore throats should not prepare food for others.

- > **Hand Hygiene**