

Strep Throat

Strep throat can be tricky. It can take on many different clinical forms, meaning that just because your child has a red throat and "white spots" does not mean that it is strep. In fact, most cases of sore throat are caused by a virus, and not strep. The worry regarding strep and "catching it early" is that if left untreated by antibiotics, the body can mount an immune response that causes rheumatic fever. Therefore, it is important to diagnose strep and treat it. However, there is a good 3-5 day window where strep can be diagnosed and treated. Many colds can start off with a sore throat the first several days, especially in the morning, and then the runny nose and cough and nasal congestion start. Therefore, if your child has cold symptoms and a sore throat, it is unlikely strep. Strep usually comes on suddenly and quickly without any real preceding symptoms. It is usually accompanied by a headache, abdominal pain, vomiting, and sometimes rash and fever.

If you suspect that your child has strep, it is important to have him or her tested. One reason is to have the correct diagnosis that will allow you to know how long your child will be contagious. And, it will allow us to track how many true strep infections your child has had. If your child is treated without being tested, in the future it will be hard to tell if they are a carrier or have a true infection, and it may lead to many unnecessary antibiotics and doctor visits. We recommend treating the symptoms and discomfort until your child can be seen in the office by a physician and tested. A physical exam along with the strep test is the best way to determine whether your child has true disease.