

From the Desk of the School Nurse

Strep Throat Alert!

August 19, 2014

There have been a few cases of Strep throat diagnosed here at Atlanta Classical Academy since the beginning of school. Because of the communicable nature of this illness, please be on the lookout for symptoms in your child. We are emphasizing diligent **hand-washing** and frequent water breaks here at school (please reinforce this at home also). I hope the following information is practical and helpful in keeping your family well.

Sore Throats and Strep:

Most sore throats are caused by viruses, as seen in colds, or seasonal allergies. However, for children between the ages of two and eighteen, there is also a tendency to develop “strep. throat.” This is caused by the *streptococcus* bacteria, which can lead to complications such as scarlet fever, rheumatic fever and kidney disease.

Symptoms usually begin 2-3 days after contact, and the degree of illness can vary from child to child. Although you can't always tell by looking, there is a somewhat characteristic appearance to strep throat. You can suspect strep most strongly if:

(1) the tonsils are beefy red

(2) the uvula is red and swollen (the fleshy part at the back of the throat that hangs down like a raindrop)

(3) there are big lymph nodes in the neck and under the chin.

The child may also talk as if he or she has a hot potato in the back of the throat. Interestingly, symptoms that tend NOT to be associated with strep throat are: *stuffy nose, cough, and laryngitis*. (These suggest another cause such as a cold or allergy).

The ONLY certain way to diagnose strep throat is with a **throat culture**. Symptoms generally occur 2-3 days before a culture will show positive results, so after a culture is taken, your child should remain at home until you know the results.

It is best to contact your pediatrician if ANY of the following occur:

- There is a **fever** over 101°
- The onset of sore throat is **rapid**.
- The sore throat persists beyond one or two days.
- A **rash** appears with the sore throat, especially one that looks like sand paper or goose bumps along with the appearance of “strawberry tongue” (signs of scarlet fever).
- Complains of **belly pain** (indicating that the abdominal lymph nodes are swollen).
- **Recent contact** with another child who was diagnosed with strep throat or the skin infection, impetigo.
- Pus or greenish-yellow **discharge** seen in the back of the throat.
- Large, rubbery **lymph nodes** in the neck region.
- **Petechiae**, tiny red dots (hemorrhages) surrounding the tonsils and extending on the palate.

- **Small white dots** or patches may be visible on the palate or tonsils.

TREATMENT:

Medical treatment is usually an antibiotic. It is important to finish the ENTIRE course of medication, even if your child feels fine. This will help ensure that the medication has time to kill all the attacking organisms down to the very last “bug”! If the entire course of antibiotics isn’t finished, the bacteria can become resistant to the antibiotic and will be much harder to treat next time.

In addition to antibiotic treatment, you can try home remedies to make your child more comfortable. Salt-water gargles and honey or lemon in tea may help soothe a sore throat. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) can be used for pain and fever. Please use over-the-counter medications only as directed.

PREVENTION:

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 coughs and sneezes.

Special note: Remember to change the toothbrush after this and other illnesses!

RETURN TO SCHOOL AFTER STREP THROAT:

Your child should not return to school until at least **24 hours after the first dose of antibiotics**, and in accordance with your doctor’s orders. You will also need a note from your doctor for your child to return to school.

Please call if we can answer any questions or you would like more information. The school clinic can be reached through the School Office, 404-369-3500. We look forward to helping in any way we can!

Sincerely,
LaNeish Holland

Sources

<http://www.cdc.gov/features/strepthroat/>