

# Children's Health

## Recognizing And Treating A Strep Infection

(NAPSA)—Strep throat is more common in children and teenagers, especially during the school year when they are in close contact and are exposed to sneezing and coughing.

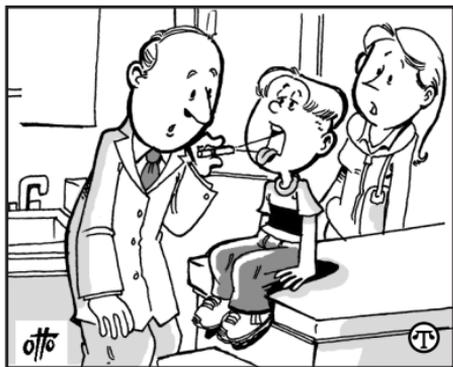
The infection, known as pharyngitis, is caused by the bacteria streptococci (strep), which grows at the back of the throat or on the tonsils. Tonsillitis often follows pharyngitis, so both conditions could be present at the same time. If it's tonsillitis, the tonsils may be reddish and enlarged and coated with a white, yellow or gray substance.

A sore throat is less likely to be strep if it's part of a cold. Doctors can distinguish strep from a viral sore throat by a throat culture and general examination to determine treatment.

Common symptoms include:

- sore or red throat
- white or yellow dots at the back of throat
- difficulty swallowing
- tender, swollen lymph nodes
- fever (101 degrees Fahrenheit or greater) or chills
- loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting or stomach pain
- rash
- headache or body ache.

If a child has these symptoms, it is important to contact a pediatrician. The doctor may recommend parents watch their child and wait to see if symptoms worsen but if a throat culture is



positive for strep, antibiotics are often prescribed. Among the most common are cephalosporins or penicillin, which are effective against this type of infection.

If a doctor prescribes an antibiotic, the symptoms usually begin to diminish within a few days. Even if the child is feeling better, it's important to take the full course of treatment to prevent development of more serious infections. To make treatment easier, ask your doctor for an antibiotic that tastes good, has easy dosing schedules and does not require refrigeration.

Other ways to comfort a child with strep throat include giving liquids or soft foods, including milkshakes, ice pops or pudding. Older children can gargle with warm salt water.

Strep throat can be prevented by hand washing, especially after coughing and sneezing and before eating. Talk to your doctor about strep throat or other children's health issues.