



NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.

Helping Hand™

Health Education for Patients and Families

Throat Culture

Your child is getting a throat culture test because they show signs of strep throat. Strep, short for *Streptococcus*, is a harmful germ (bacteria). If it's not treated, it can harm the body. There are 2 types of tests used to find out if your child has strep throat.

- A rapid strep test (rapid antigen test)
- A throat culture

Signs and Symptoms of Strep Throat

A child with strep throat may have some, or all, of these symptoms:

- Red, sore throat
- White spots on back of throat, tonsils, or tongue
- Bright red tongue
- Tiny red spots on the roof of the mouth
- Red, sandpaper-like rash on body (scarlet fever)
- Stomachache, poor appetite, nausea, or vomiting – especially in younger children
- Fever
- Swollen, tender neck glands
- Trouble swallowing
- Headache, fussiness
- Sleeping more than usual

What Happens

Both tests use the same type of soft swab. Your child will tilt their head back, open their mouth wide, and say “ahh.” The doctor or health care provider will brush 1 or 2 swabs over the back of the throat. Your child may gag a little.

- Rapid strep test (rapid antigen test) – It takes up to 30 minutes to get the results of a rapid strep test. You will stay until you get them.
- Throat culture – A swab is sent to the lab for testing. It takes 1 to 2 days to get the results.
- If your child had a rapid strep test first, the same swab can be sent to the lab to do the throat culture. Your child will not need to be swabbed again. The lab will notify your child's doctor or health care provider, who will then let you know the results.

Test Results

- A **positive** test means your child has strep throat.
 - Antibiotic medicine must be started right away. Early treatment can prevent harm to the body.
 - It's important that your child's doctor or health care provider knows how to contact you by phone.
- A **negative** test means the sore throat may be caused by a virus. Antibiotic medicine does not help treat viral infections.

How to Protect Others

- Keep your child away from others as much as possible for 12 hours after they start taking an antibiotic. Strep is contagious (can be spread to others).
- Everyone should wash their hands often with soap and water or use hand sanitizer. Good handwashing prevents the spread of infection.
- Moisture from your child's nose and mouth is contagious. Have your child cover their mouth when coughing or sneezing. Throw tissues away right after they've been used and wash hands.
- Do not share drinking cups or eating utensils.
- Tell the school nurse and your child's teacher that your child has strep throat. The school needs to know so other parents can be told to watch their children for symptoms.
- If anyone in the family gets a sore throat, they should be checked by their doctor or health care provider to see if they have strep.