

## Throat Culture

“Strep throat” is an illness caused by the streptococcus bacteria. The child with strep throat may have some or all of these signs:

- Red throat
- White spots on the back of the throat
- Fever
- Trouble swallowing
- Swollen glands in the neck

If your doctor suspects your child has strep throat, a throat culture may be done. This test shows whether germs (bacteria) are causing your child's sore throat.

### The throat culture

Your child will be asked to “open wide”. Two cotton-tipped swabs will be touched to the back of the throat. The lab will do a “rapid strep test screen.” The test usually takes up to half an hour. You will be asked to wait until the test results are read. If the rapid strep test screen is negative, the lab will do a follow-up test. Your child will not need a second swab collection for the follow-up test. The follow-up test will confirm the negative result or it may be positive. If it is positive, the doctor will be notified by the laboratory the next day.

- A **positive** test means your child has “strep throat” caused by bacteria. Antibiotic medicine must be given within a few days to prevent germs from causing heart problems. If you do not have a home phone, be sure to give us a number where we can reach you. We will need to call you if the test result is positive.
- A **negative** test means the sore throat may be caused by a virus. Antibiotic medicine is not given because it does not help viral infections.



**Picture 1** It is very important for your child to finish all of the antibiotic.

### Caring for your child

Keep your child home from school until he or she has been taking an antibiotic medicine for 24 hours. Tell the school nurse your child has strep throat.

## Caring for your child, continued

- If your child has a fever, he may play quietly indoors. If a fever of 102 degrees F continues or does not improve in 2 to 3 days, the doctor should recheck your child.
- Encourage your child to drink lots of liquids that are not carbonated. These include grape or apple juice, water, flavored fruit drinks and popsicles.
- Give soft foods only when your child wants them. (It may hurt the throat to swallow.)
- Salt water gargles may make the throat feel better. (Dissolve ½ teaspoon salt in ½ cup warm water and use every 3 to 4 hours.) Do not let your child swallow the salt water.
- Plan quiet play activities that do not involve talking. Talking can make the throat more painful. You may run a cool mist vaporizer in your child's room.
- You may give acetaminophen or ibuprofen (such as Tylenol® or Motrin®) to reduce fever or relieve pain. Follow the doctor's orders. Do not give products that contain aspirin.
- After your child has been taking the antibiotic medicine for 24 hours, throw away his toothbrush. Replace it with a new one. This will help to prevent re-infection.
- Clean toys with hot water and soap to prevent re-infection.

## How to protect others

- As much as possible, keep your child away from others for 24 hours after the child starts the medicine. If other family members get sore throats, they should be checked by their doctors.
- Make sure others do not drink from your child's glass or use his spoon or fork.
- Teach everyone in the family to wash their hands at least 4 times a day, especially after using the bathroom and before eating.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse.

**For directions to the nearest Laboratory Service Center, please call Laboratory Services at (800) 934-6575 or visit [NationwideChildrens.org/Lab](http://NationwideChildrens.org/Lab).**