



## Notes from the Nurse

As we enter into winter and spend more time indoors, there is a greater chance of “getting and giving germs” to each other. There have already been a few cases of strep throat reported across the different grade levels. Streptococcal pharyngitis, or strep throat, is the most common bacterial cause of a sore throat.

Symptoms of strep throat are varied. About 20% of people with group A streptococcal infections present with a sore throat, fever, a red throat and swollen tonsils with white patches. The rest are asymptomatic, have a fever or mild sore throat alone; or they have nonspecific symptoms such as a headache, fatigue, nausea, or a stomach ache.

Strep throat is spread by direct or close contact with a carrier. The incubation period is usually one to three days. The period of communicability lasts 10-21 days if the strep is left untreated and is only 24 hours once appropriate antibiotic treatment has been started. A child with a strep throat infection can be readmitted to school after 24 hours of antibiotic treatment as long as the fever, if present, has subsided for 24 hours as well. A throat culture is usually necessary to diagnose strep throat.

It is important to remember that the vast majority of sore throats, almost 90% are caused by viral infections such as the flu or common cold. Environmental allergies can also cause a sore throat due to a post-nasal drip. If your sore throat persists for more than two days and is accompanied by fever, headache, nausea, or vomiting, it's time to see a doctor. In the mean time, listed below are some things you can do to make a sore throat feel better:

1. Drink plenty of liquids.
2. Gargle every few hours with a solution of  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon of salt dissolved in  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of warm water.
3. Don't eat spicy foods. This can aggravate sore throats.
4. Suck on a piece of hard candy or a medicated lozenge every so often.
5. Take Tylenol for pain or fever.

If your student has been diagnosed with strep throat by a physician, please inform the school. The nursing office keeps track of the reported cases. If you have any questions about strep throat, please call the health office at 493-8215.