

## Notes From The Nurse

As the new school year begins and our students come together to learn, and grow, they are also back in close contact with 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 and the affected classrooms. A notice will not be sent home for every individual case that is reported however, if multiple students in the same class are affected notices will be distributed to the affected classroom.

If you have any questions about strep throat, please call the health office at 493-8105.