



Why do a strep test?

A strep test is uncomfortable for a few seconds, but it is the best way to accurately diagnose strep throat. A long swab, looking much like a Q-Tip®, is wiped on the back of the throat and any other red places in that area to grab any bacteria. The swab is then sent to a laboratory for a rapid strep test.

Strep throat cannot be diagnosed by looking in the throat - a lab test must be done.

If the strep test result is...

Negative: You do not have strep throat and antibiotics will not help

- Even if the rapid strep test comes back negative, the laboratory will continue watching the test to see if strep bacteria grows. If it turns positive over time, your provider will contact you with the updated result.

Positive: You have strep throat and an antibiotic will be used to kill the bacteria that is causing your symptoms

- Strep throat is very contagious. Be sure to wash your hands often, cover your mouth when coughing, avoid sharing eating or drinking utensils, and avoid close physical contact. The person diagnosed should stay home from work or school for 24 hours after starting the antibiotic.

Symptoms of strep throat:

- Headache
- Stomachache
- Nausea
- Vomiting, especially with children
- Fatigue
- Difficulty swallowing
- Loss of appetite
- Rash
- Fever

Be sure to:

- Tell the provider if the person diagnosed has taken antibiotics recently
- Avoid antiseptic mouthwash before you visit the provider's office

How do you feel better?

- Get plenty of liquids (water is best) to prevent dehydration, especially if you have a fever
- Avoid spicy or acidic foods, such as orange juice
- Get warm liquids like soups, sweetened tea, or hot chocolate to soothe the throat
- Eat easy-to-swallow foods, such as soup, applesauce, cooked cereal, mashed potatoes or yogurt
- If you are prescribed antibiotics, take the entire prescription as directed to clear the infection
- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen as directed for fever and throat discomfort
- Cold foods, such as frozen yogurt or fruit popsicles may help soothe the throat
- Get plenty of rest

References:

- 1.KidsHealth: Strep Throat, Sore Throat, Strep Test, kidshealth.org, 9/26/17.
- 2.Dictionary.com: Antibiotic, dictionary.com, 9/26/17.
- 3.Get Smart, cdc.gov/getsmart, 9/26/17.