# IS MY SORE THROAT CAUSED BY "STREP" AND NEEDING ANTIBIOTICS?

Strep throat, strep tonsillitis, and strep pharyngitis all mean basically the same thing. There is a particular bacterium called Group A Streptococcus that can cause severe sore throat, fever, body aches, headache, and even nausea.  Often the lymph nodes in the front of your neck will swell and become tender as well.

You will rarely see runny nose, stuffy nose, and cough if you have strep throat.  If you have all these other symptoms, you much more likely have a viral infection and do not need antibiotics. Only 15% of all sore throats are likely to be caused from Group A strep and a vast majority of those Group A strep infections occur in the 5-15 year old age group.  The back of the throat and tonsils (if you have them) can be swabbed and tested for evidence of the strep bacterium.  Some people will always have a positive strep test even when they feel great.  These people are carriers of the strep bacterium without getting sick from it.  Don't share drinks with them if you are susceptible to the strep infection!!

It is very important to know if you have strep as it must be treated with antibiotics to reduce the risk of the strep affecting your heart and/or kidneys.  You have about a 9 day window to start the antibiotics and prevent these complications, but if you have a sore throat lasting more than 4 days you should be seen in the clinic. If by day 3-5 you have also developed runny nose, stuffy nose, and cough you do not have strep.