

Nurse's Notes

Sore Throat...Strep Throat or Viral?

We have had quite a few cases of Sore throats at Chinook recently. Most sore throats are caused by viral illnesses and are not responsive to treatment with antibiotics.

Strep Throat

This bacterial disease is transmitted by contact with large respiratory droplets, or by direct contact with an infected person or carrier. Typically, strep throat begins with a sudden onset (within 12 hours) of fever (>101), a very red and extremely sore throat causing difficulty swallowing or speaking. Enlarged and tender lymph nodes can be felt in the neck and tonsils will look enlarged (close to touching) with whitish spots or streaks. However, a person may have strep throat with very mild symptoms or no symptoms at all.

It is important to seek medical treatment for strep throat. Untreated strep throat infections can lead to rheumatic fever, rheumatic heart disease, or kidney infections. Persons with untreated strep throat can also become carriers, and while no longer feeling ill themselves, can transmit the disease to others for weeks or even months.

Call your health care provider if your child has:

- severe sore throat causing difficulty swallowing
- fever (>101)
- enlarged glands in felt in the neck
- white spots or pus on the tonsils
- body rash

Viral Sore Throat (Pharyngitis)

A viral sore throat differs from strep throat and will usually resolve on its own in 5-7 days. Viral sore throats come on gradually and are often accompanied by other cold symptoms (runny nose, cough, red or watery eyes, and sneezing) and do not cause significant difficulties swallowing. If a fever is present it is usually below 101. Other causes of sore throat include smoking, pollution or irritants in the air, allergies, and dry air.

Things you can do to help relieve the symptoms of a sore throat:

- Have your child gargle frequently with warm salt water (1/2 teaspoon/ cup of warm water).
- Encourage your child to drink more juices, water, and other fluids.
- Use a humidifier in the child's bedroom while sleeping, or hang several damp towels in the room.
- Encourage bed-rest.