Strep Throat Basics

White drainage patch

Swollen and sore throat

Tonsil

A.D.A.M.
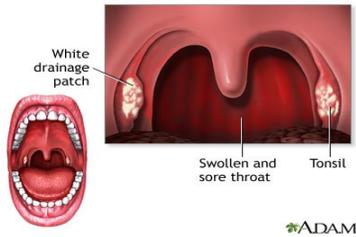
So what is Strep Throat? You're feeling fine one moment and then suddenly your throat is killing you, you're running a high fever, and all your energy has vanished -- you probably have strep throat.

"Strep," in this case, stands for *Streptococcus pyogenes*, a common strain of bacteria that can live in your throat and nose for months without causing any harm. Tests show that about 15% of healthy people have the strep "bug" living uneventfully in their mouths or throats, without causing any symptoms. Too often people who are carriers for strep have no symptoms, but they can pass an infection on to others.

Once in a while, though, these bugs can turn on you. Maybe you've been under too much stress, or your immune system has been overtaxed from fighting a virus such as a common cold or the flu. Or perhaps you've picked up a bug from an infected person. Whatever the reason, the normally quiet strep organisms can suddenly start spewing out toxins and inflammatory substances to bring on a sore throat and other symptoms.

Although strep throat feels awful, it can be cured easily these days with antibiotics such as penicillin or erythromycin. In fact, one of the biggest problems with strep is getting people to seek treatment. Because a fever and sore throat are also symptoms of colds and the flu, strep throat is often mistaken for these ailments.

But colds and flu normally take several days to develop, they are caused by viruses and usually accompanied by a cough, stuffy or runny nose, and headache, and they go away on their own. A strep throat, by contrast, usually arrives in a hurry and without any other cold or flu symptoms and should be treated with antibiotics to stop its spread to others.

Strep throat should never be taken lightly. Untreated, strep throat can quickly lead to a more severe illness such as rheumatic fever or acute nephritis (which can damage your kidneys) -- and both of these can be fatal.

**If you would like more information, please contact
Med-Cert, Inc. at 866-633-2378 (toll free) or at www.medcertinc.com**

MED-CERT

Medical Management Resources

Guiding your way to better health management