

## “My Throat Hurts!”

The clock says it is 7:15. There are 3 lunches half packed, Bobby lost his homework and the big yellow bus has just turned down your street. Your presentation for this morning's meeting is quietly drifting somewhere in cyberspace and little Suzy says “Mom, Dad, my throat hurts”.

Does this sound familiar? It should, every year millions of Americans come down with a “sore throat”. Is it Strep Throat? Pharyngitis? Tonsillitis? The fact is, although these terms are often used interchangeably, they are not the same. How do you know if its strep throat? Let's take a look at what these words mean and give you some strategies for helping little Suzy with her “sore throat”.

**Tonsillitis:** Tonsillitis is a non-specific term that means your tonsils are swollen and inflamed. It does not mean you have a bacterial infection but is most likely a virus. Viruses do not require antibiotics and will resolve on their own. Mononucleosis is a virus that will cause a sore throat and may make the tonsils very red and swollen.

**Pharyngitis:** Pharyngitis is also a non-specific term describing the very back of your throat and is used when we do not find “strep throat”. It is also viral in nature and can be caused by Mononucleosis or even Coxsackie virus. Fever is typical with these viruses and may be markedly elevated. Headache, stomach ache and fatigue are common with viruses and will usually resolve in 3-5 days.

**Strep Throat:** Strep throat is caused by bacteria. It causes a severe sore throat, often described as “swallowing glass”. The person usually has a decreased appetite, high fever, swollen glands and may have pus on the tonsils.

Do all of these symptoms sound the same? Yes! So how do you know if Suzy has strep throat?

Viral sore throats tend to be milder than strep and may clear up quickly. If your child is complaining of a sore throat for more than a few hours, call your doctor. They may want you to come in and have a strep test done. This is a simple swab of the back of the throat that can identify strep in as little as 5 minutes. Sometimes 2 cultures are taken to ensure your child does not have strep throat. The second test is sent to a laboratory, and is generally read within 48 hours.

If your child does have strep throat the doctor will prescribe antibiotics. Treat the fever with Tylenol or Motrin as directed, increase fluid intake and return to your doctor if the symptoms worsen or return shortly after finishing the full course of antibiotics.

The good news for Suzy is she probably does not have strep throat. If she does it can be treated easily with antibiotics. Remember, if you have any concerns about your child's sore throat call your doctor.

Now if we only had a way to get presentations back from cyberspace!

*A Community & Educational Public Service provided by Dr. Stephen Hassett and Wayne Gravell, P.A. EmUrgentCare, PLLC*