

Strep Throat While Pregnant: Symptoms and Treatment

 www.healthline.com/health/pregnancy/strep-throat

During pregnancy, you may enjoy perks like glowing skin and thick hair. Unfortunately, being pregnant doesn't offer protection against a bacterial infection like strep throat. As unfair as it seems, you can come down with strep throat while you're pregnant.

The good news is, not every sore throat automatically means that you have a strep infection. Still, it's worth recognizing the symptoms and treatment options for strep throat in case you catch it during your pregnancy.

Risk factors

This bacterial infection makes your throat sore and scratchy, along with other unpleasant symptoms. Usually, it's accompanied by a fever and general exhaustion.

According to the [Mayo Clinic](#), a strep throat infection that is left untreated can cause potentially serious complications including kidney inflammation and rheumatic fever.

Strep throat comes from bacteria known as *Streptococcus pyogenes*, or group A *streptococcus*. Sometimes, it's confused with Group B *streptococcus*. This is a separate, unrelated bacterium that can be found in the vaginal or rectal area. A mother can pass this type of infection to her baby during delivery. It isn't related to the bacteria that cause strep throat.

Group A *streptococcus*, which does cause strep throat, is a very contagious bacterium that spreads easily. You could catch it if someone with the infection sneezes or coughs and you inhale airborne droplets. You can also catch it if they're sharing food or drinks with you. The bacteria can also survive on surfaces like doorknobs and then be transferred from your hand to your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Symptoms

It can be difficult to separate various aches and pains during your pregnancy, but symptoms of strep throat will be noticeably different.

Symptoms of strep throat include:

- very painful throat
- red, swollen tonsils
- headache
- white spots in the throat or tonsils
- significant lack of energy, general weakness, and fatigue

- difficulty swallowing and eating
- swelling around the neck
- enlarged lymph nodes
- fever
- loss of appetite
- cough

Other symptoms of strep throat can include nausea, difficulty breathing, and abdominal pain. You don't need to be experiencing every symptom noted above to have strep throat, but if you have a few of them, it's worth speaking to your doctor.

If your symptoms point to strep throat, a quick test will confirm your suspicions. Your doctor will use a swab to collect a culture from your tonsils, and then have the results reviewed.

Treatment

How is strep throat treated during pregnancy?

Antibiotics are prescribed to treat strep throat. During pregnancy, medications need to be carefully monitored. That's why medications are assigned a pregnancy risk factor classification.

These ratings are intended to help you and your doctor make the best decision about medications during your pregnancy. Follow the guidelines below.

- Category A is the best rating for a medicine: It means that controlled studies show no risk or no evidence of harm to you or your baby.
- Category B medicine should be taken with caution: It means that animal studies haven't shown risk, but no controlled studies have been performed on pregnant women.

Cephalexin, amoxicillin, and penicillin are three common antibiotics used to treat strep throat.

- Cephalexin is a category B medication. Studies in animals show that it doesn't impact fertility or hurt the developing baby. This medication does cross the placenta to the baby. There aren't currently any reliable studies in pregnant women. For those reasons, this medication should only be used during your pregnancy when there aren't other options.
- Amoxicillin is a category B medication. Animal studies have shown no adverse effects on the developing baby. Again, it's recommended only when the benefits outweigh the potential risks.
- Penicillin is also in category B. In women with no penicillin allergy, it has shown no negative impact on the growing baby. Penicillin does pass into breast milk, but there are no reported negative side effects.

If you test positively for strep throat, you and your doctor can discuss your options.

Home remedies

There are also home remedies to help relieve the discomforts of strep throat. You can try the following:

- Gargle with warm salt water to help your sore throat feel better.
- Avoid cold liquids, which can aggravate a sore throat. Instead, try caffeine-free herbal teas, such as chamomile or lemon tea with cinnamon. Be sure to stay hydrated.
- Get plenty of rest to allow your body to heal.

Next steps

Staying hydrated is a great way to reduce the risk of infection during pregnancy, so remember to drink your water. It's also a good idea to be diligent about washing your hands before eating and after you've been out in public.

If you suspect strep throat during your pregnancy, speak to your doctor right away. Diagnosing strep as soon as possible means you can begin treatment. That's the quickest way to avoid complications and start feeling better.