Strep Throat Tests

While most sore throats are caused by viruses, at times they are caused by a bacteria called group A Streptococci (strep throat). It is important to determine the cause because the strep bacteria is treated with antibiotics.

There are two types of tests for strep throat, a rapid strep test, and a throat culture. Both tests are done by wiping a swab over the back of the throat and then using chemicals to identify the type of bacteria present. The Rapid Strep Test takes 10 - 20 minutes. If the result of the rapid strep test is positive, no further testing is needed. If the rapid strep test is negative, a throat culture may be done. With a throat culture, the swab is used to spread the bacteria on a gel plate and grow it in a lab, which takes 1-2 days. In some cases, the culture will detect strep bacteria not found with the rapid strep test."

If the result of the rapid strep test is positive, no further testing is needed, and your caregiver will prescribe antibiotics. However, if the rapid strep test is negative, a throat culture should be performed to confirm it. With a throat culture, the swab is used to spread the bacteria on a gel plate and grow it in a lab, which takes 1-2 days.

Not all test results are available during your visit. If your test results are not back during the visit, make an appointment with your caregiver to find out the results. Do not assume everything is normal if you have not heard from your caregiver or the medical facility. It is important for you to follow up on all of your test results.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your symptoms are not improving within 1-2 days, or you are getting worse.
- You have any other questions or concerns.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop trouble with swallowing that is getting worse.
- You develop trouble breathing.
- You or your child has an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.

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