Retropharyngeal Abscess

A retropharyngeal abscess is an abscess that is located in the back of the throat. An abscess is an area infected by bacteria (germ) and contains a collection of pus.

SYMPTOMS

On one or both sides of the back of the throat it usually causes

- Swelling.
- Pain.
- Tenderness.
- Inflammation.

This is often accompanied by:

- High fever.
- Stiff neck.
- Sometimes difficulty breathing.

DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosis is often made by physical exam. Some times specialized x-rays are taken to aid in the diagnosis or give added valuable information.

TREATMENT

The treatment of retropharyngeal abscess usually consists of:

- *Antibiotics* (medications which kill germs).
- Surgical *incision* (cut by the surgeon).
- Drainage (an incision is made over the abscess and the pus is drained out of the abscess).

Treatment is usually performed under general anesthetic with the patient sleeping. The airway must be protected from the pus being removed. **It is very important that a retropharyngeal abscess be treated aggressively and followed closely because progression to more severe infection can lead to life threatening problems.**

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Apply heat to your neck to help relieve discomfort. Do this with warm compresses or a warm heating pad 3 to 4 times a day for 20 minutes each time. Do not sleep with a heating pad. It can cause severe burns.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop increased pain, swelling, drainage, or bleeding in the wound site.
- You develop signs of generalized infection including muscle aches, chills, fever, or a general ill feeling.
- You develop stiff neck or severe headache not relieved with medications.
- An oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C) develops, not controlled with medication.
- You have a worsening of any of the problems that brought you to your caregiver.

See your caregiver for a recheck in 1 day or as suggested. Take antibiotics as directed if they were prescribed.

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