

# New strep throat guidelines tackle antibiotic resistance

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Image courtesy of Blausen Medical

Most sore throats are actually caused by viruses.

(HealthDay)—Doctors need to accurately diagnose and treat strep throat in order to avoid inappropriate use of antibiotics that can lead to drug-resistant bacteria, according to updated guidelines from the Infectious Diseases Society of America.

People often say they have strep throat. Most sore throats are caused by a virus, however, not by *Streptococcus* bacteria, and should not be treated with antibiotics, which are ineffective against viruses, noted an IDSA news release.

Research shows that up to 15 million people in the United States go to the doctor for a sore throat every year. As many as 70 percent of patients receive antibiotics for a sore throat, but only 20 percent of those patients have strep throat, according to the IDSA.

The guidelines also advised that when a [strep infection](#) is confirmed by testing, it should be treated with penicillin or [amoxicillin](#)—if the patient does not have an allergy—and not with an antibiotic such as cephalosporin.

"We recommend penicillin or amoxicillin for treating strep because they are very effective and safe in those without [penicillin allergy](#)," lead author Dr. Stanford Shulman, chief of [infectious diseases](#) at the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, said in the news release.

Other antibiotics more likely to lead to drug resistance also are more expensive, Shulman added.

Children who have recurrent strep throat should not have their tonsils removed solely to reduce the frequency of throat infections, according to the guidelines.

Patients with a [sore throat](#) do not need to be tested for strep throat if they have a cough, runny nose, hoarseness or mouth sores. These are strong signs of a viral infection.

The guidelines, published online Sept. 10 and in the October issue of the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, also outline what tests to conduct if strep throat is suspected and how to treat the condition.

**More information:** The U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases has more about [strep throat](#).

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