

# House Calls

by Rikki Schuster, PA-C

“Back to school” not only means books, backpacks, and exams, it also means kids in classrooms spreading stories, laughter, and you guessed it...GERMS!

One of the most common illnesses that strike school-aged children is strep throat. Strep throat is usually characterized by a rapid onset of throat pain that is worse with swallowing, headache, fever, appetite loss, and a generalized ill feeling. Typically you will have tender, swollen glands in the neck with fire engine red tonsils that may or may not be speckled with pus.

Strep throat is caused by the streptococcal bacteria that is spread by person-to-person contact through saliva or nasal secretions. Your risks of contacting strep throat increase if there was a recent strep infection in your household, if you smoke, or if you are fatigued. The best way to prevent getting infected yourself is to avoid contact with those who are infected.

If you find yourself or a family member having the symptoms of strep throat described, you should seek medical evaluation and treatment. Some medical providers may find that a throat culture is helpful in aiding with the diagnosis of strep. However, others may opt to use their clinical expertise to make the diagnosis and treat accordingly.

If you are diagnosed with strep throat, it is usually curable in ten to twelve days with antibiotic treatment, and symptoms are usually better after two to three days of treatment. Be sure to finish all antibiotics until they are gone or you may develop a more severe “rebound” infection. One out of four family members usually catch strep within two to seven days after exposure, however the general rule of thumb is you are no longer con-

tagious after being on the antibiotic for twenty-four hours and no longer have a fever.

Home remedies for relief of your symptoms include warm salt-water gargles and a cool mist humidifier to provide moisture. This relieves the dry, tight feeling in the throat. Warm compresses to the neck help relieve pain in swollen glands. Over the counter pain medicine such as Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen may be used if needed. Increase your fluid intake as much as possible to keep yourself well hydrated. Be sure to consult your medical provider if symptoms worsen or are not improving after three to four days of treatment for possible re-evaluation if indicated.

Rikki Schuster provides Medical House Calls for acute, non-life threatening illnesses in your home, workplace, hotel, or vacation cottage. She is a certified Physician Assistant with over seven years of Emergency Medicine and Urgent Care experience, including three years on the Outer Banks. She may be contacted by calling 252-475-2007 seven days a week.