

At-Home Strep Test Policy

The FDA has cleared several at-home rapid strep tests for detecting strep throat. These are available for purchase on Amazon and are advertised to have high accuracy for both ruling in and ruling out strep throat. This sounds like a simple and quick way for parents to figure out why their child has a sore throat, but in reality, things can be complicated. We recommend that your child come to the clinic for strep testing. Here are some key points why:

- If a swab is not performed correctly the test can show negative (no strep) even when strep is present.
- A strep test can't diagnose more serious and life-threatening conditions that can happen in children such as deep tissue neck infections (e.g. peritonsillar abscess, epiglottitis, retropharyngeal swelling, etc.).
- Many people are strep carriers meaning that they have strep living in their throat even when not sick. Therefore a positive test in a child who has a viral cause for sore throat can be misleading.
- Perhaps most importantly, in clinic, we always send our negative strep swabs for culture (watched in a lab for several days for strep growth). This is critical because in the event that the rapid test is negative, the culture will provide a much more definitive answer. If strep goes untreated, there is the potential for serious complications such as nephritis (kidney inflammation), rheumatic heart disease (heart valve inflammation), and others.
- If the rapid test is negative, there are other potentially treatable conditions that we could identify in clinic. For example, some people with influenza who meet specific criteria can be treated with Tamiflu if started within 48 hours of symptoms starting.

With all this in mind, we will not prescribe antibiotics without a swab that was performed in clinic.



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