Why do sore throats matter?
Sore throats can be caused by a certain type of bug (strep A bacteria). If this bug is not treated, it can cause rheumatic fever and heart damage for life.

What is rheumatic fever?
It is a serious disease caused by a strep throat. It can make children very sick and cause heart damage. This can mean a lifetime of feeling breathless and tired. Rheumatic fever may also shorten their life.

What can I do as a parent/caregiver?
Rheumatic fever is easy to prevent – if your child has a sore throat, get it checked every time by a health worker, nurse or doctor.

Some schools also do throat checks – ask if your child’s school does this.

Who is most likely to get rheumatic fever?
• Māori and Pacific Island children between 5 and 15 years of age.
• Families/whānau who have had rheumatic fever before.
• Families/whānau who live in houses with lots of other people.

Ask your children to tell you when they have a sore throat so it can be checked for the strep bug. You might need to explain what a sore throat feels like.

If your child has a strep throat, your child will be given 10 days of antibiotics to take. It is important your child finishes the full course of antibiotics. This will make sure the strep throat does not cause rheumatic fever.

What else do I need to do?
Tell the health worker if other people in your home have a sore throat because they might need to be checked.

To help stop strep throat spreading in your family/whānau, ask everyone to:
• cover their mouth when coughing or sneezing
• wash their hands with soap and dry them after coughing or sneezing
• not share water bottles, drinking cups or toothbrushes.

Where can I get more information?
Ask a health worker or health centre for more information about rheumatic fever and sore throats. Or visit the sorethroatsmatter.org.nz website.

Why do sore throats matter?
Sore throats can be caused by a certain type of bug (strep A bacteria). If this bug is not treated, it can cause rheumatic fever and heart damage for life.

What is rheumatic fever?
It is a serious disease caused by a strep throat. It can make children very sick and cause heart damage. This can mean a lifetime of feeling breathless and tired. Rheumatic fever may also shorten their life.

What can I do as a parent/caregiver?
Rheumatic fever is easy to prevent – if your child has a sore throat, get it checked every time by a health worker, nurse or doctor.

Some schools also do throat checks – ask if your child’s school does this.

Who is most likely to get rheumatic fever?
• Māori and Pacific Island children between 5 and 15 years of age.
• Families/whānau who have had rheumatic fever before.
• Families/whānau who live in houses with lots of other people.

Ask your children to tell you when they have a sore throat so it can be checked for the strep bug. You might need to explain what a sore throat feels like.

If your child has a strep throat, your child will be given 10 days of antibiotics to take. It is important your child finishes the full course of antibiotics. This will make sure the strep throat does not cause rheumatic fever.

What else do I need to do?
Tell the health worker if other people in your home have a sore throat because they might need to be checked.

To help stop strep throat spreading in your family/whānau, ask everyone to:
• cover their mouth when coughing or sneezing
• wash their hands with soap and dry them after coughing or sneezing
• not share water bottles, drinking cups or toothbrushes.

Where can I get more information?
Ask a health worker or health centre for more information about rheumatic fever and sore throats. Or visit the sorethroatsmatter.org.nz website.
If your child has a sore throat...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Get it checked</th>
<th>If not checked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Throat checked by health worker</td>
<td>Throat not checked by health worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If strep A throat, then antibiotics are needed</td>
<td>Sore throat may be a strep throat and doesn’t get treated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure your child finishes the full course of antibiotics</td>
<td>Rheumatic fever develops and can lead to rheumatic heart disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No rheumatic fever</td>
<td>Heart damage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ask your children to tell you when they have a sore throat so it can be checked.**

Together, we can help our young people grow up with strong healthy hearts.

Together, we can help prevent rheumatic fever in our communities.

---

**SORE THROATS MATTER**

They can lead to rheumatic fever and heart damage

If a child has a sore throat, get it checked every time

sorethroatsmatter.org.nz

Healthline 0800 611 116

Heart problems for life

Happy healthy heart

---

Brochure produced by the Health Promotion Agency – Oct 2012