

## **Nurses' Nook**....sore throats and antibiotics.

It's winter and "I have a sore throat" is a common complaint we hear from our children. The good news is the vast majority of sore throats are caused by viruses and will resolve on their own with good supportive care incorporating rest and hydration. In general, symptoms associated with a viral sore throat are those of the common cold: sneezing, runny/stuffy nose, watery eyes, possibly a low fever (<101) and mild head and body aches. Post-nasal drip and mouth breathing from the stuffy/runny nose associated with a viral infection can irritate the throat. Antibiotics only fight bacterial infections and are of no value in the common cold or a viral sore throat.

In school aged children about 20-30% of sore throats (CDC, 2015) are caused by bacteria (streptococcal) and will likely be treated with antibiotics. Most commonly children with strep throat have very red tonsils that may have white patches or streaks of pus on them. They usually have swollen lymph glands in their neck, a fever, and more severe headaches and body aches. They may even have some nausea and vomiting and a skin rash. These children should be seen by their health care provider and will have a throat culture to determine the cause of their sore throat. If it is bacterial in nature (strep-throat) then antibiotics will help to fight off the infection. It is still important that these children get rest and hydration to help them to get well. Students with confirmed strep throat should remain out of school for 24 hours on antibiotics to prevent spreading it to other susceptible students.

As with most communicable diseases frequent and proper handwashing is a major key to prevention. In addition not sharing food or drinks with others is very important.

As always if you have any questions please call the nurse in your student's school.