

## What can happen if my child/tamariki does not have treatment?

Your child may get Rheumatic Fever, which could lead to permanent heart damage.

## What can happen if my child/tamariki does get Rheumatic Fever?

- They will need to go to hospital for bedrest, antibiotics, blood tests and heart checks.
- Your child/tamariki could be off school and may be too tired to play their usual sports and activities.
- Your child/tamariki will need regular doctors visits and dental checks.
- Your child/tamariki will need monthly antibiotic injections for at least 10 years to protect them from further attacks of Rheumatic Fever.

*He korokoro ora  
he manawa ora  
Mo tatou katoa*

*A healthy throat  
a healthy heart  
for all of us*



**For further information about Rheumatic Fever please contact:**

Population Health  
Level 5, Hugh Monkton Trust Building  
Cnr Rostrevor and Harwood Streets,  
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# Helping to prevent Rheumatic Fever



**Sore throats matter  
Get them  
checked!**



**Sore throats  
matter!**

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## What is Rheumatic Fever?

Rheumatic Fever is a serious preventable disease that can cause permanent heart damage.

## What causes Rheumatic Fever?

Group A Streptococcal bacteria throat infection ('strep throat') can cause a reaction which leads to Rheumatic Fever. This often starts with a sore throat, but weeks later it may lead to joint pain, tiredness, fever or jerky movements. Heart damage can develop immediately, or within a few months. People who have had Rheumatic Fever can get it again if they are not treated.

## Do all sore throats lead to Rheumatic Fever?

Many people have sore throats that just go away in a few days. BUT... if a sore throat is caused by the group A Strep bug it could lead to Rheumatic Fever.

## How do I know if it is a group A Strep bug?

Only a throat swab can tell if the group A strep bug is present. If a child or young person complains of a sore throat make sure they get checked by a doctor.

Ask the doctor to take a throat swab.



Sore throat

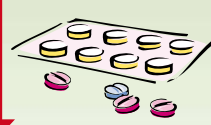


Throat swab by doctor  
(Strep A bug identified)



Not seen by a doctor

Early treatment  
(antibiotics for 10 days)



Rheumatic Fever prevented

Healthy heart



No treatment

Rheumatic Fever may develop

Permanent heart damage may occur



## What can I do to prevent Rheumatic Fever?

If the swab shows that the group A Strep bug is present, the doctor will usually prescribe antibiotics which will need to be taken for 10 days. It is really important that the whole 10 day course is completed to prevent Rheumatic Fever from developing.

## How do we stop the strep bug spreading?

The group A Strep bug is very contagious and can be spread by coughing and sneezing around others:

- Teach your children/tamariki and whanau to cover their mouths when coughing or sneezing.
- Ensure children/tamariki wash and dry their hands after coughing or sneezing.
- Strep throat can occur again (your child does not become immune to the strep bug).
- It is important to take your child to the doctor or nurse for a check each time they have a sore throat.

## Who is most at risk?

Anyone can get Rheumatic Fever, but those most at risk are:

- Children and young people between the ages of 5 and 14 years old.
- Maori and Pacific children.
- People with family/whanau who have had Rheumatic Fever
- People who share a house with lots of others.