

# Healthy Outcomes

Let's make 2025 a year to remember for all the right reasons!

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Central PA  
Health Care Quality Unit  
Monthly Newsletter  
Winter 2025



## How to know if you have strep throat

By Geisinger Wellness

Recognizing signs of strep throat – versus a sore throat due to a virus – is key to early diagnosis and treatment.

Having strep throat does mean having a sore throat. But not every sore throat is strep throat. Viruses are the culprit behind most sore throats, but strep is caused by a bacterial infection in the throat and tonsils. It gets its name from the type of bacteria that causes it: group A Streptococcus, or group A strep.

Anyone can get strep throat, but it is more common in children, especially those between 5 and 15 years old. And it's more prevalent during the colder months when people spend more time together indoors and in close contact, especially

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### WHAT'S NEW

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How to Know if you have Strep Throat

Saline Nasal Sprays and Nose Drops

Key Points for a Non-speaking Adult with a Sore Throat

Managing Humidity Levels

HRST Gatekeeper update

HCQU Training Calendar

Veggie Omelet in a Cup

Marfan Awareness Month

in schools and daycare centers.

"While it can look different from person to person, recognizing strep symptoms is key for early diagnosis and treatment," says Lauren Cooper, MD, a family medicine provider at Geisinger. "Strep will not go away on its own. But with proper treatment, it should resolve in 7 to 10 days."

### Signs of strep throat

If you or your child have been exposed to strep throat, it can take 2 to 5 days for symptoms to develop.

While strep throat is a mild illness in most cases, it can be very painful. A severe and persistent sore throat that comes on suddenly and looks red is a telltale sign of strep.

### Other common symptoms of strep throat include:

- Body aches and fever of 101° F or higher
- Painful swallowing
- Red, swollen tonsils
- White patches or streaks of pus on the tonsils
- Tiny red spots on the roof of the mouth (called petechiae)
- Painful, swollen lymph nodes in the neck
- Fatigue and general ill feeling



Change your toothbrush or toothbrush after you have had a cold, the flu, a mouth infection, or a sore throat.

Sometimes, strep throat can cause headaches, stomach pain, nausea, and vomiting. Some people also develop a rash, known as scarlet fever. It typically appears on the neck and chest first, then can spread to other parts of the body.

"If you have a cough, runny nose and congestion, a virus or allergies are likely causing the discomfort, not strep," says Dr. Cooper. "Symptoms of strep throat do not include those of the common cold."

**Is strep throat contagious?** [Read more](#) on contagiousness, treatment, and prevention.

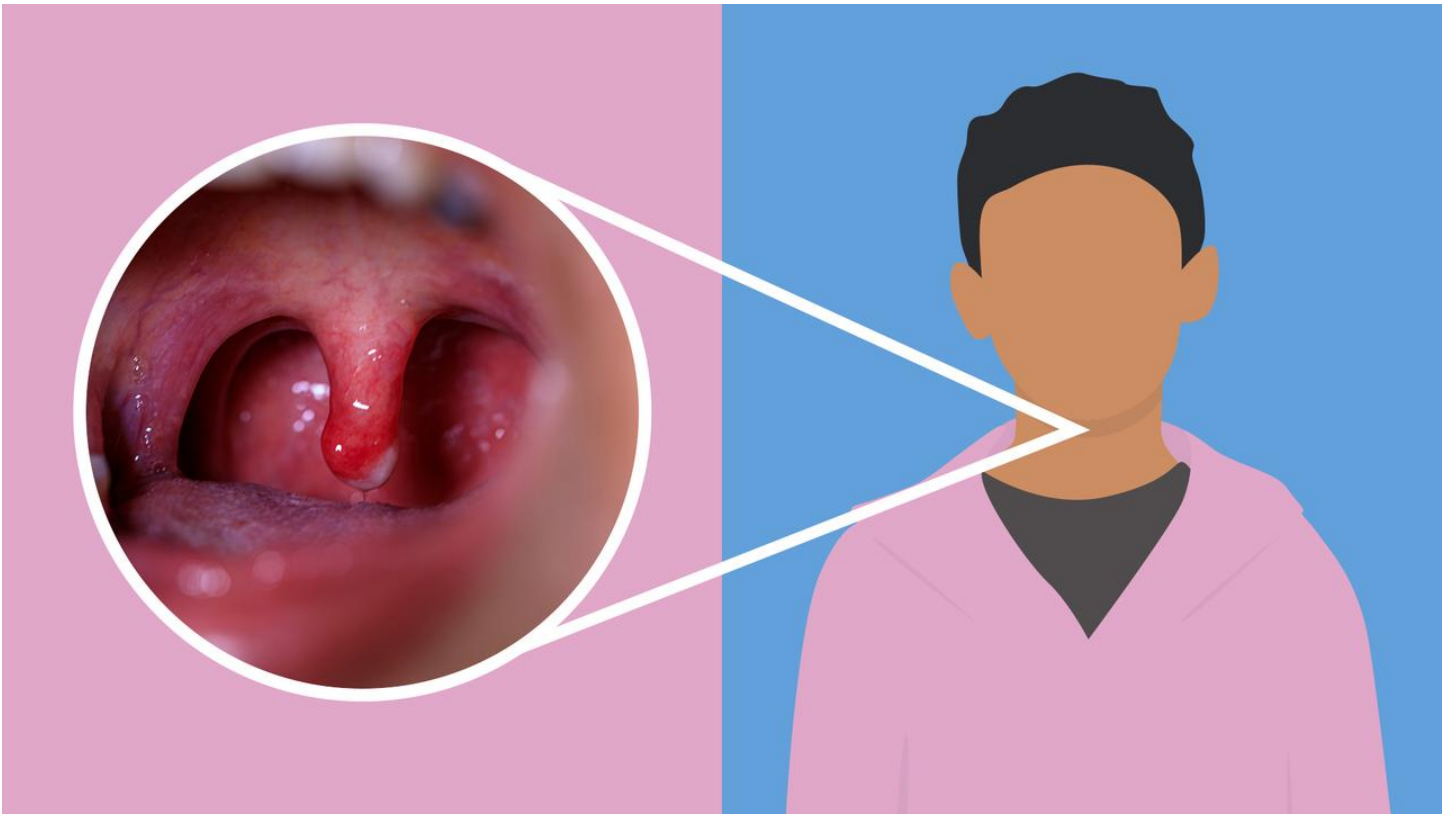


## SALINE NASAL SPRAYS AND NOSE DROPS

Nonprescription saline nasal sprays and nose drops are used to keep nasal tissues moist, relieve nasal irritation, and help thick or dried mucus to drain.

Saline nose sprays and drops can be purchased without a prescription or can be made easily at home.

[DIY saline solution and directions.](#)



## KEYPOINTS FOR A NON-SPEAKING ADULT WITH A SORE THROAT

For a non-speaking adult with a sore throat, signs might include: difficulty swallowing, facial expressions of discomfort when attempting to swallow, mouth opening or throat gestures, redness in the throat area visible upon inspection, swollen lymph nodes in the neck, excessive drooling, and possible signs of pain like grimacing or rubbing the throat area; they may also exhibit signs of discomfort or distress when food or liquids are offered.

Key points to look for:

- **Visual cues:**
  - Grimacing or wincing when swallowing
  - Throat gestures, like reaching towards the throat
  - Difficulty opening the mouth fully
  - Visible redness in the throat area
  - Swollen lymph nodes in the neck
- **Behavioral changes:**
  - Avoiding food or liquids
  - Excessive drooling
  - Distressed facial expressions when offered food or drink
  - Rubbing or touching the throat area

### Sore Throat Remedies

## Gargling with Saltwater

Saltwater is an excellent home remedy for a sore throat. It can reduce swelling and reduce inflammation and irritation. It may help to draw out infections or irritants to the surface of the throat. This makes it easier for your body to deal with them.

Dissolve  $\frac{1}{2}$  a teaspoon of salt in 8 oz of warm water and gargle with it every hour or so.

# Manage Humidity Levels

**Did you know** the humidity level in your home can affect your risk of getting sick with a viral illness?

A 2021 study suggested that moderate humidity levels between 40-60% may reduce the risk of viral transmission and make some viruses less likely to survive in the air.

Plus, dry indoor conditions can make you more likely to experience allergies.

Many home thermostats can detect and display indoor humidity levels. If your home's humidity drops under 30% consider investing in a humidifier and taking extra precautions as cold and flu season arrives, which can include more frequent handwashing and disinfecting surfaces. [More](#)

## 7 BENEFITS OF USING HUMIDIFIERS IN WINTER



- It Moisturizes Skin
- Prevents Snoring
- Helps In Easing the Issue Of Asthma
- Reduces Any Risk of Infection
- Reduces Dry Eyes
- Reduces Static Charge in the Air
- Prevent the Spread of Airborne Viruses

One  
Simple  
Change  
makes  
a big  
difference.

## HRST Gatekeeper Update

Effective January 1, 2025, all completed **HRST User Request Spreadsheets** should be mailed to the designated gatekeeper mailbox: [hrstgatekeepers@geisinger.edu](mailto:hrstgatekeepers@geisinger.edu).

The HCQU has designated HRST gatekeepers which communicate with **IntellectAbility** to add, remove or report changes to HRST users.

[A Guide to Central PA HCQU Supports and Services](#)

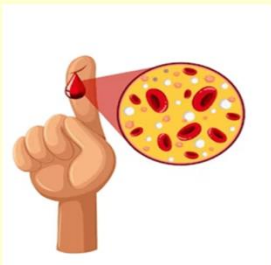
# Upcoming HCQU Trainings

- [Fatal 5](#) 1/22/2025 @10 AM
- [StationMD Telemedicine for Individuals with IDD \(Informative Session\)](#) 1/28/2025 @ 10 AM \*\*\* Intended audience: SCOs as well as any residential provider that would like to learn more about the STAT service \*\*\*
- [Aspiration Pneumonia](#) 1/30/2025 @ 1 PM
- [Dehydration](#) 2/6/2025 @ 1 PM
- [Weis Market Virtual cook along: Heart Health for Valentine's Day](#) 2/12/2025 @ 1 PM
- [Emergencies: Are you ready?](#) 2/18/2025 @ 10 AM
- [Emergencies: Are you ready?](#) 2/27/2025 @1 PM
- [The Fatal 5: Constipation](#) 3/6/2025 @10 AM
- [Weis Market Virtual cook along: Benefits of Canned & Frozen Foods](#) 4/16/2025 @ 1 PM

## Take a Free Online Course

A variety of free online courses are available to anyone interested in expanding their knowledge of different healthcare issues. A certificate is provided after completion that allow you to receive credit towards your annual human services training requirement.

Bloodborne Pathogens



Presented by the:  
Central PA Health Care Quality Unit

CENTRAL PA HEALTH CARE  
QUALITY UNIT

- [Aging and Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [Allergy Awareness](#)
- [Alzheimer's](#)
- [Bloodborne Pathogens](#) **NEW**
- [Bowel Management](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Dehydration](#)
- [Dental Health](#)
- [GERD](#)
- [Menopause](#)
- [Skin Health and Pressure Injuries](#)
- [Sepsis](#)
- [Urinary Tract Infection](#)

# Find Special Olympics Near You

[Special Olympics Pennsylvania](#) has fifty-four active county and city programs that fit into nine regions across Pennsylvania. These programs serve a growing body of 13,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities in the areas of sports, health, and leadership.



## Be a Part of Something Bigger

Sign up to receive the Special Olympics Pennsylvania Newsletter and other updates.

[Newsletter Sign Up](#)

Learn more about how you can [Get Involved](#).

## The Paterno Family Beaver Stadium Run

### Sunday, April 27th, 2025! (Blue-White Weekend)

Runners and walkers of all ages and abilities participate in a 5K run or Mount Nittany Health 2 Mile Family Fun Walk through Penn State's scenic campus, through the Beaver Stadium Tunnel, ending on the 50-yard line inside the stadium. Proceeds benefit Special Olympics Pennsylvania and the 15,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities. [REGISTER](#) [DONATE](#)



# Veggie Omelet in a Mug

Love an omelet but time is an issue? Try this easy microwave version that is done in a flash.



## Ingredients (serves one)

- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons low-fat or nonfat milk
- 1 dash salt
- 1 dash pepper
- ¼ cup finely chopped vegetables (any type)
- 2 tablespoons shredded cheese (any type)

## Directions

1. Lightly grease the inside of a 12-ounce microwave-safe mug.
2. Add the eggs, milk, salt, and pepper to the mug and stir well. Mix in the vegetables and cheese.
3. Microwave for 45 seconds. Stir. Return to the microwave and cook until the mixture has puffed and set, 60 to 90 seconds. The omelet may look wet on the top but will dry as it cools.

[Silver Circle Magazine](#)



An estimated 200,000 people in the U.S. have **Marfan Syndrome** or a related condition. About half do not know it.

## What are the key features of Marfan Syndrome?

Marfan syndrome and related conditions affect the body's connective tissue. Connective tissue holds the body together and plays a role in its growth and development. Because connective tissue is found throughout the body, Marfan syndrome and related disorders can affect many parts of the body, including the heart and blood vessels, bones and joints, eyes, skin, and lungs. [More info.](#)

## Let the Central PA HCQU help you!

Our HCQU includes registered nurses experienced in serving individuals with an Intellectual Disability (ID) and/or Autism and their support staff and families. Visit our [website](#) for their contact information, the counties they support and our upcoming trainings.