

## **From the Rheumatic Fever Nurse at The Children's Health Hub, Rotorua:**

### **A reminder to parents and caregivers as the weather is getting cooler of the importance of having sore throats and slow to heal skin infections checked.**

Rheumatic fever happens when your child's immune system makes a mistake and attacks other parts of your child's body, as well as the strep throat germs. It can also develop from strep infections on the skin.

Most strep throats get better and don't lead to rheumatic fever. However, in a small number of people, an untreated strep throat develops into rheumatic fever, where their heart, joints (elbows and knees), brain and skin become inflamed and swollen.

A strep throat infection can lead to rheumatic fever, even if it's the first time or a one-off. The risk of getting rheumatic fever gets higher when someone has repeated untreated strep throat infections.

While the symptoms of rheumatic fever may disappear on their own, the inflammation from even one rheumatic fever attack could develop into rheumatic heart disease, where there is scarring of the heart valves.

If your child has strep throat, they'll be given antibiotics to clear up the infection before it can develop into rheumatic fever. It's very important that they complete the whole course of antibiotics, even if they're feeling well. This will stop the infection turning into rheumatic fever.

There are lots of places you can get a sore throat checked

1. Your child's school may have a free sore throat checking programme. Contact the school to find out.
2. There is a free nurse-led clinic for people aged between 4 and 19 with sore throats, skin infections, head lice, scabies. It is held at Western Heights Health Centre, 1 Brookland Road, Western Heights Monday-Thursday 3pm-6pm and Friday 3pm-5pm. No appointment is needed and you don't need to be registered at Western Heights surgery. Their number is (07) 347 0565.
3. You can go to your normal doctor or nurse. You may have to pay a fee; you can phone ahead to check. Let the receptionist know you have a child with a sore throat, just in case they have nurses available to respond quickly.
4. You can also call Healthline on [0800 611 116](tel:0800-611-116) if you have any immediate concerns about your child's sore throat.