

## Epiglottitis

**What is it:** The epiglottis — a small cartilage "lid" that covers your windpipe — swells, blocking the flow of air into your lungs.

**Who is at risk:** Epiglottitis can occur at any age.

**Cause:** Several factors can cause the epiglottis to swell — burns from hot liquids, direct injury to your throat and various infections. The most common cause of epiglottitis in children in the past was infection with *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib), the same bacterium that causes pneumonia, meningitis, and infections in the bloodstream. In adults *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (pneumococcus), another bacterium that can cause meningitis, pneumonia, ear infections and blood infection (septicemia) including *Streptococcus* A, B and C, a group of bacteria that also can cause diseases ranging from strep throat to blood infections

**Symptoms: Children and adults only differ in amount of time symptoms progress.**

In children, signs and symptoms of epiglottitis may develop within a matter of hours, including:

Fever, Severe sore throat, Abnormal high-pitched sound when breathing in (stridor), Difficult and painful swallowing, Drooling, Anxious, restless behavior, Greater comfort when sitting up or leaning forward

**How is it diagnosed:** This is an emergency diagnosis that requires immediate assessment at an ED.

**Throat examination.** Using a flexible fiber-optic-lighted tube, Chest or neck X-ray, and monitoring with throat culture and blood tests

- **Complications: Respiratory failure.** either from infection or from injury — the airway narrows and may become completely blocked. This can lead to respiratory failure — a life-threatening condition in which the level of oxygen in the blood drops dangerously low or the level of carbon dioxide becomes excessively high.
- **Spreading infection.** Sometimes the bacteria that cause epiglottitis cause infections elsewhere in the body, such as pneumonia, meningitis, or a blood infection (sepsis)

**Home Treatment:** there is no home treatment for this condition, it is an emergency and requires swift evaluation and care in an Emergency department.

**Did you know?** The best home treatment is prevention. The Hib vaccination is at 2mo, 4mo, 6mo and 1 year to provide full protection. Of course, the Hib vaccine doesn't offer guarantees. Immunized children have been known to develop epiglottitis — and other germs can cause epiglottitis, too. That's where commonsense precautions come in:

- Don't share personal items.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available.

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/epiglottitis/basics/prevention/con-20027854>

