



SORE THROATS Matter



Dear Teachers and Nurses

The following is a health and physical education unit plan (NZ Curriculum) on the topic of rheumatic fever for Years 2-8. The focus of the unit plan is on sore throat management and teaching key messages for the prevention of acute rheumatic fever (ARF) and rheumatic heart disease (RHD).

The comic 'Sore Throats Aren't Cool' and an inquiry learning plan are provided as additional resources (for Intermediate Years 7-8).

Why do sore throats matter?

Sore throats matter because sore throat prevention and management are key factors in helping to eradicate ARF in New Zealand children.

Streptococcus A (strep throat) is the name of a bacterial infection causing sore throats. In some people it may cause the body's immune system to attack normal cells and can result in ARF.

New Zealand children, particularly Māori and Pacific children aged between 5 and 14 years, have one of the highest rates of ARF in the developing world. ARF may cause permanent damage to the child's heart valves and lead to RHD, resulting in many long-term health problems and can often lead to premature death.

The good news is that ARF is preventable!

Treating the sore throat can stop ARF from developing.

Through raising awareness with our children of what sore throats are, what to do about them and how to stop them spreading, you can help to eradicate this preventable disease.

While not all sore throats are strep throats, it is important to take a sore throat seriously to stop strep throat spreading and to prevent ARF and RHD.

Evidence indicates that community interventions of sore throat management in schools are effective in reducing the occurrence of ARF. School sore throat programmes in high-risk areas are also recommended.

