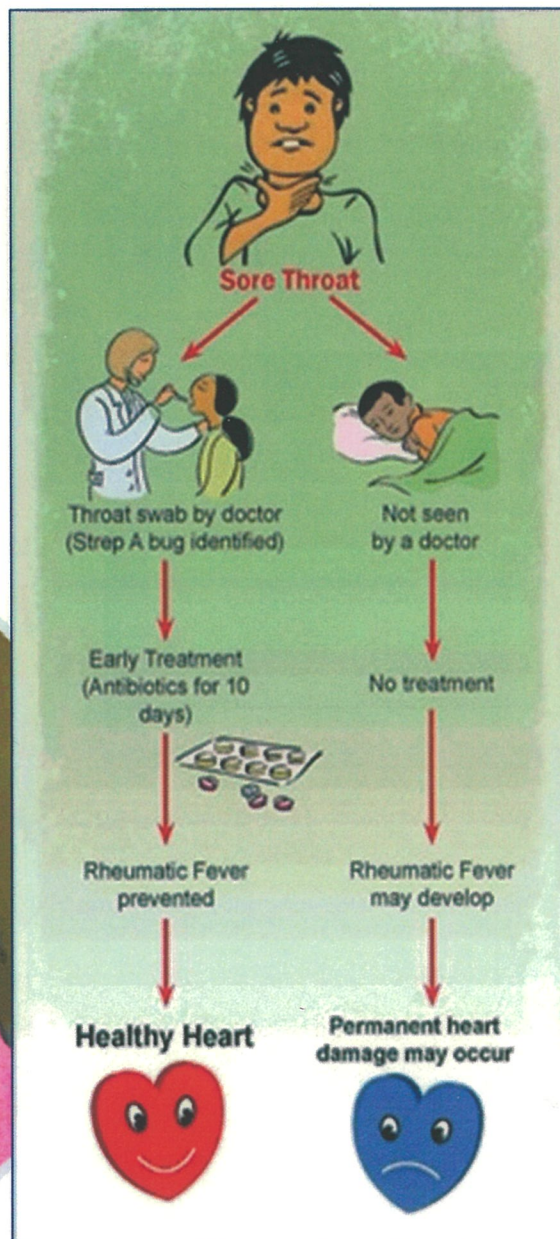


Why are Māori and Pacific island children most at risk of developing acute rheumatic fever?

What is Rheumatic Fever?

Acute Rheumatic Fever (ARF) is a serious disease. It often starts with a sore throat caused by a group A streptococcal infection. Māori and Pacific children between ages 5 – 15 are the most vulnerable groups for developing this disease, and a few weeks after the initial infection these symptoms may develop:

- sore or swollen joints (knees, elbows, ankles and wrists)
- jerky movements
- stomach pain
- a skin rash
- a fever



“Approximately 160 people are diagnosed every year in New Zealand with ARF, Māori and Pacific school aged children experiencing the highest rates”.

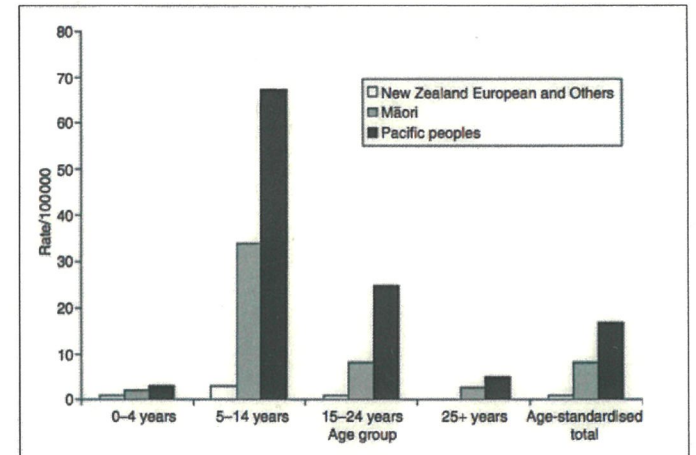


Fig. 6 Average annual rates of acute rheumatic fever first admissions by prioritised ethnicity and age group, New Zealand, 1996–2005.

Implications for Nursing practice:

- Nurses need an awareness of at risk populations.
- Expert knowledge of rheumatic fever disease processes, and treatment for educating patients.
- To use a holistic perspective acknowledging the patients home and living environment & including Whanau in education.

Fortunately Rheumatic fever is preventable!

- Make sure sore throats are checked by a doctor or nurse, and ask for a throat swab.
- If the swab comes back as positive, your doctor will prescribe a 10 day course of penicillin.
- Look into ways to improve housing conditions such as mold, dampness, and the cold.
- This will reduce the chance of developing streptococcus infections, and improve you and your families general health.

Income: Māori and Pacific groups commonly are found in the lower socioeconomic bracket. Influencing the standard of housing they can afford.

Low income = lower standard of housing. Damp, poorly insulated & cold households.

Why are Māori and Pacific children at most risk?

Culture: Māori and Pacific groups commonly live in crowded households, increasing susceptibility for transmitting strep throat infections.

Education: Public awareness of this illness is poor. Consequences of 'simple' sore throats are unknown for many of NZ, especially Māori and Pacific groups.

Environment: Poor living conditions decreases immunity & increases susceptibility for contracting illness.

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