

## Sore Throat

Sore throats are extremely common. Sore throat is usually caused by a harmless viral throat infection which will get better by itself. You may have bacterial tonsillitis if you have pus on your tonsils (the two clumps of tissue on either side of your throat), painful glands in your neck and fever – but no cough. The Epstein-Barr virus, which causes glandular fever, is responsible for about 1 to 10 out of 100 cases.

Your sore throat is likely to get better within 3 to 7 days (and a maximum of 2 weeks) without the need for treatment by a health professional. Most sore throats last for an average of 8 days.

You won't need antibiotics (which can often do more harm than good if given unnecessarily) for most throat infections.

### How can I avoid triggers/ suggested lifestyle changes

- **Home remedies** - You can relieve symptoms of sore throat by eating cool, soft food and drinking cool or warm drinks, as well as sucking lozenges, ice cubes, ice lollies or hard sweets. Gargling with warm, salty water may also help reduce swelling and pain.
- **Avoid Smoking** – Try to avoid smoking and smoky environments as much as you can as this may irritate your throat.
- **Hydration** - Drink plenty of water, at least 6 to 8 glasses of fluid (preferably water) every day, particularly if you also have a fever.

### How do I treat?

- **Pain relief** - Painkillers help to relieve symptoms of sore throat, fever, and headaches in adults. Use what suits you best and talk to your pharmacist if you're unsure. Paracetamol and Ibuprofen or Aspirin are the most commonly used pain killers for this type of illness.
- **Gargles, lozenges and sprays** - There is not enough good quality evidence to recommend non-prescription gargles, lozenges and throat sprays, however you may still find them helpful
- **Speak to your pharmacist** - for advice if you're not sure which type of medicine is best for you and your symptoms.
- **GPs don't normally prescribe antibiotics for sore throats** as they are usually caused by viral infection; hence antibiotics will not work. A GP will only prescribe if they think you have a bacterial infection.

### When should I seek advice?

Seek medical advice if your symptoms are no better after two weeks or if you have frequent sore throats that do not respond to pain killers.

Warning symptoms and signs include:

- **High fever** - You have a persistent high temperature over 38°C for more than 3 days that does not come down even if you take ibuprofen and/or paracetamol.
- **Glandular fever** - A sore throat that doesn't get better within 10 to 14 days or that gets worse rather than better may suggest glandular fever.
- **Breathing** - You find it hard to breathe in, and your throat feels like it's closing up
- **Drooling and swallowing** - You're drooling and find it difficult to swallow – this is an emergency!
- **Severity** - Your pain is severe and does not respond to over the counter pain killers.
- **Fluid intake** - You find it difficult to drink enough fluids and become dehydrated
- **Effects on day to day life** - Your symptoms are so bad that they severely affect your quality of life and prevent you from functioning normally.
- **HIV/AIDS or other causes of reduced immunity** - If you suffer from a sore throat and have a deficient immune system because, for example, you have HIV/AIDS, or you take certain medication (such as chemotherapy, high dose steroids, disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs, or a drug called carbimazole), you should seek medical advice if you develop a sore throat.

**More information is available at the following website**

- NHS website - [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- Or visit your local pharmacy for advice

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