



Sore Throat

(Pharyngitis, Tonsillitis)

Patient and Family Education

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Your child's doctor or a member of your child's health care team will talk with you about specific care for your child.

Facts about sore throats

A virus causes most sore throats. Viruses cannot be treated with an antibiotic.

- Bacteria called "Strep" also cause some sore throats. Have your child seen by a doctor to check if a Strep test needs to be done.
- Other causes of sore throat include such things as:
 - Allergies
 - Dry air
 - Smoke
 - Chemicals
 - Pollution
- A "quick test for Strep" can be done to find out if Strep caused your child's sore throat. If the quick test is negative, a longer test called a throat culture will be done. Sometimes, the culture is positive even if the quick test was negative.
- If your child has not been seen by a doctor yet, make an appointment during regular office hours to find out if he needs a Strep test.

What can be done for a sore throat?

- If a virus or allergies is causing your child's sore throat, an antibiotic will not help and could be harmful. This is why you must wait for the result of the quick test or throat culture to decide if your child needs an antibiotic.
- If the throat culture shows a Strep germ, your child's doctor will call you within 24-48 hours and prescribe an antibiotic.

How is a sore throat treated?

Some general guidelines to follow include:

- Avoid spicy or sour foods. Give your child soft bland foods
- Give plenty of cool liquids to drink. Popsicles may also help.
- Do not make your child eat foods if he wants only liquids.
- Wash your hands and your child's hands well with soap and water often to help stop the spread of germs.
- Do not share toothbrushes, eating utensils or kiss on the lips.
- Keep your child away from cigarette smoke and odor.
- Antibiotics are not always needed. If they are prescribed by your child's doctor, be sure to give them for the full time prescribed, even if your child feels better.
- Use throat lozenges (for children age 8 or older), sprays or salt water gargles, as advised by your child's doctor for throat pain.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Sore Throat, continued

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol or less costly store brand) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil or less costly store brand) may be given for fever or pain. Follow the directions on the box carefully or ask your child's doctor how much medicine to give.

DO NOT:

- Give your child more than 5 doses of acetaminophen in a 24-hour period.
- Give acetaminophen to babies less than 3 months of age without talking with your child's doctor.
- Give ibuprofen to babies less than 6 months of age without talking with your child's doctor.
- Give acetaminophen and ibuprofen together.
- Alternate these medicines.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor if your child has any of these:

- Does not smile or show interest in play for at least a few minutes during a four-hour period
- Begins drooling
- Has more pain on one side of the throat than the other
- Has pain that gets worse or does not get better with treatment
- Cannot open his mouth wide
- Has a hard time swallowing
- Has a muffled voice
- Has a new rash
- Has pain when he moves his neck
- Has increased neck size or swelling
- Shows signs of dehydration (drying out) such as:
 - No urine in six to eight hours in an infant less than 1 year old
 - No urine in more than eight hours in a child older than 1 year old
 - No tears when crying
 - Sunken eyes
 - Dry lips and mouth

Also call your child's doctor if:

- You have questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.
- Your child has strep and other family members develop a sore throat or fever.

When can my child return to school or daycare?

Follow your child's doctor's advice if you have been told your child has Strep throat. If your child does not have Strep, he may return to school or daycare when he is fever-free without medicine for 24 hours and is feeling better.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.