

Sore Throat

This fact sheet helps you to know what's 'normal' and what you can expect to happen if you develop a sore throat. It also tells you when you should become concerned and seek medical advice from a health professional.

Useful facts

- **How common is sore throat?** Sore throats are extremely common.
- **What's causing sore throat?** Sore throat is usually caused by a harmless viral throat infection that gets better by itself. You may suffer from *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.

What can I expect to happen?

- ✓ **How long are my symptoms likely to last?** 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 eight days.
- ✓ **Will I need antibiotics?** You won't normally need antibiotics (which can often do more harm than good if given unnecessarily) for most throat infections.
- ✓ **Will I need any tests?** You're unlikely to need any tests, such as a throat swab.

What can I do myself to get better – now and in the future?

- ✓ **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.
- ✓ **Smoking** Avoid smoking and smoky environments as much as you can.
- ✓ **Fluids** Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of fluid (preferably water) every day, particularly if you also have a fever.
- ✓ **Pain killers** 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.



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