

Sore throat - Advice Sheet



Advice for parents and carers

Sore throat is extremely common in children, teenagers and young adults and is often associated with a high temperature. Tonsils are the small glands that sit either side of the throat and are sometimes affected (tonsillitis).

When should you worry?



RED

If your child has any of the following:

- Is going blue around the lips
- Becomes pale, mottled and feels abnormally cold to touch
- Has a fit / seizure
- Becomes extremely agitated (crying inconsolably despite distraction), confused or very lethargic (difficult to wake)
- Develops a rash that does not disappear with pressure (the 'Glass Test')

You need urgent help.

Go to the nearest Hospital Emergency (A&E) Department or phone 999



AMBER

If your child has any of the following:

- Is unable to swallow their own saliva
- Is having difficulty opening their mouth
- Is having breathing problems, such as rapid breathing, shortness of breath or laboured breathing (drawing in of muscles below the lower ribs when they breath in)
- Seem dehydrated (dry mouth, sunken eyes, no tears, drowsy or passing less urine than usual)
- Is becoming drowsy (excessively sleepy) or irritable (unable to settle them with toys, TV, food or picking up) - especially if they remain drowsy or irritable despite their fever coming down
- Has extreme shivering or complains of muscle pain
- Is under 3 months of age with a temperature above 38.0° / 100.4°F, or 3-6 months of age with a temperature above 39°C / 102.2°F (but fever is common in babies up to 2 days after they receive vaccinations)
- Continues to have a fever above 38.0°C for more than 5 days
- Is getting worse or if you are worried

You need to contact a doctor or nurse today.

Please ring your GP surgery or call NHS 111 - dial 111



GREEN

- If none of the above features are present

Self Care

Continue providing your child's care at home. If you are still concerned about your child, call NHS 111 – dial 111

Symptoms of tonsillitis

- Sore throat and pain on swallowing
- Fever can be present
- Swollen, painful glands in your neck
- Tonsils red with pus

These symptoms usually improve within 4-7 days.

Causes

Most cases of sore throat in young children (under 5 years of age) are caused by viral infections; your child may also have a runny nose, cough or earache. Tonsillitis can be caused by a number of different bacteria, but it is usually due to group A streptococcus bacteria (strep throat).

Treatment

Most children with sore throat do not need antibiotics. That's because research has shown that antibiotics make very little difference to how quickly your child gets better. However, if your child has any features of severe infection (amber or red features above), they will need to be urgently seen by a healthcare professional who may decide that your child may benefit from antibiotic treatment.

You can help relieve symptoms by;

- Giving your child paracetamol or ibuprofen to help relieve pain
- Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids
- You can buy a throat spray from your pharmacist which may help with pain

Prevention

It is not always easy to avoid catching these infections. However, good hygiene practices can prevent infections spreading.

- Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly
- Use a tissue when coughing or sneezing and put it in the bin
- Avoid sharing glasses or utensils with people who are unwell