



Sore throat

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Introduction

Pharyngitis, which is commonly referred to as a sore throat, is inflammation of the back of the throat. It is often felt as pain and even irritation or scratchiness in the throat that usually worsens when the person tries to swallow. There are several other ailments such as tonsillitis and laryngitis that are also commonly referred to as having a sore throat.

A viral infection like a cold or influenza is the most common cause of a sore throat. These infections usually resolve on their own with only symptomatic treatment required. Bacterial infections, like Strep throat (streptococcal infection), on the other hand, often require antibiotic treatment to treat the infection, relieve symptoms and prevent complications. Other causes of a sore throat may include dry air, smoking, hay fever, acid reflux, and breathing heavily polluted air or chemical fumes.

Symptoms of a sore throat might include:

- Pain or scratchiness in the throat
- Pain that worsens with swallowing or talking
- Difficulty swallowing
- Sore, swollen glands in the neck or jaw
- Swollen, red tonsils
- White patches or spots on the tonsils
- A hoarse or muffled voice

Treatment

Home remedies may be helpful to relieve sore throat and are especially helpful as treatment in the case of viral infections (that should not be treated with antibiotics).

- Drink warm or cold fluids – the liquids may help clear the mucous membranes and soothe dry scratchy throats.
- Gargle with warm salt water – this helps to reduce the swelling

and inflammation. It may also help in loosening mucous that is causing irritation. Use a ¼ teaspoon of salt in a cup of warm water.

- Steam and humidify – moist warm air can soothe a sore throat and help to loosen phlegm. It will also be helpful in treating any associated symptoms such as congestion and coughing.
- Popsicles – they are similar to drinking cold liquids in helping to calm irritated and swollen throats.
- Honey – in warm water or herbal teas, coats the throat to reduce irritation

Other in-home treatments would be over-the-counter (OTC) remedies. These can be topical preparations as well as OTC pain medication such as paracetamol or a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) such as ibuprofen or naproxen. The use of aspirin should be avoided in children under the age of 16 years, because of the possible association between aspirin usage and Reye's syndrome.

Topical preparations include the many available lozenges, throat sprays and gargles. These preparations can contain one or more of the following ingredients:

- Local anaesthetics that have a numbing effect and help to ease pain. The local anaesthetics included in mouth and throat products include dibucaine and benzocaine.
- Anti-inflammatory lozenges that contain, e.g. flurbiprofen – not recommended for children under the age of 12 years.
- Benzylamine has pain-relieving and anti-inflammatory activity.
- Menthol is sometimes included for its cooling and pain-relieving effect.
- Antiseptics and disinfectants.

When to seek medical attention

If any of the following symptoms are present with a sore throat, the patient should be referred to the doctor:

Table I: Products available for the treatment of a sore throat

	Product	Dosage
Lozenges	Andolex®-C Each lozenge contains 3 mg benzydamine hydrochloride, 1.3 mg cetylpyridinium chloride	* Dissolve 1 lozenge slowly in the mouth every 1–2 hours; max 12 lozenges/24 hours * <i>Not recommended for children under 6 years</i>
	Medi-Keel A® Each lozenge contains 12 mg benzocaine, 1.5 mg cetylpyridinium chloride	* Dissolve 1 lozenge slowly in the mouth every 2–3 hours as required * <i>Not recommended for children under 6 years</i>
	Strepsils® Intensive Each lozenge contains 8.75 mg flurbiprofen	* Dissolve 1 lozenge slowly in the mouth every 3–6 hours as required; max 5 lozenges/24 hours * <i>Not recommended for children under 12 years</i>
Oral rinse	Andolex®-C Each 15 ml contains 22.5 mg benzydamine hydrochloride, 18 mg chlorhexidine gluconate	* Gargle with 15 ml for at least 30 seconds at 1.5–3 hourly intervals as needed * <i>Children 6–12 years: use 5–15 ml as a gargle every 3 hours</i>
	Medi-Keel A® Each 15 ml contains 5 mg dibucaine hydrochloride, 30 mg benzocaine, 3.713 mg cetylpyridinium chloride	* Gargle with 15–30 ml every 3–4 hours as needed
	Oranix® Each 15 ml contains 22.5 mg benzydamine hydrochloride, 18 mg chlorhexidine gluconate	* Gargle with 15 ml for at least 30 seconds at 1.5–3 hourly intervals as needed * <i>Children 6–12 years: use 5–15 ml as a gargle every 3 hours</i>
Throat spray	Andolex®-C Each 15 ml contains 22.5 mg benzydamine hydrochloride, 18 mg chlorhexidine gluconate	* 5–10 sprays directly onto painful area and swallow gently; repeat 1.5–3 hourly as needed
	Oranix® Each 15 ml contains 22.5 mg benzydamine hydrochloride, 18 mg chlorhexidine gluconate	* 5–10 sprays directly onto painful area and swallow gently; repeat 1.5–3 hourly as needed * <i>Not for use in children under 6 years</i>
	Orochlor® Spray Solution Each 100 ml contains 266.625 mg benzocaine, 1.071425 ml chlorhexidine gluconate solution 20%	* 4–8 sprays every 4 hours with a max of 32 sprays a day * <i>Children 6–12 years: 2–4 sprays every 4 hours with max of 16 sprays a day</i>

- Breathing difficulty
- Skin rash
- Drooling because the patient cannot swallow
- Struggle to open the mouth
- Swelling of the tongue or neck
- Stiff neck
- Patient has an underlying chronic illness or is taking medication that may suppress the immune system

Conclusion

While a sore throat can make a patient feel under the weather, especially if accompanied by other cold and flu symptoms, it usually clears up within a week to 10 days with effective treatment, whether that is symptomatic or with antibiotics in bacterial throat infections. Patients may participate in their usual activities as soon as they feel well, while remembering to observe practical prevention measures such as handwashing and cough etiquette.

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