

Do antibiotics help?

- Most sore throats are caused by viruses. This means that antibiotics will not be effective against them.
- Even for sore throats which are caused by bacteria, we know the body's own defences can usually clear the infection.
- **9 out of 10 sore throats resolve in 7 days without antibiotics.**
- If you have to contact your medical practice for advice, your doctor or nurse will need to examine your throat before deciding with you whether an antibiotic or another treatment is needed.
- Everyone needs to use antibiotics wisely. Using them too much, or when they are not needed, encourages bacteria to become resistant. This means in the future the antibiotic may no longer be effective against the bacteria.
- Antibiotics themselves can also cause side effects such as diarrhoea, skin rashes and stomach upsets.

If you would like to find out more about self-treating common health problems ask your pharmacist, call the free healthline on 08085 202030 or email healthpoint@nhs.net

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SORE THROAT?

Antibiotics are not the answer in most cases.

SO WHAT CAN YOU DO?

WHEN YOU'RE ILL,
KNOW WHO TO TURN TO.



What might be the cause of a sore throat?

Sore throats often occur along with a hoarse voice, mild cough and a swelling of the glands in your neck. The soreness typically gets worse over 2-3 days and then gradually goes within a week. A sore throat usually indicates that you are fighting an infection. Most sore throats are caused by viruses, although some are caused by bacteria. You may also have other cold symptoms like fever, headache, aches and pains.

What can you do?

- Suck throat lozenges.
- Drink plenty of fluids, especially warm drinks- these will soothe your throat.
- Take a painkiller such as paracetamol or ibuprofen regularly according to the dosage instructions. This will also help with other symptoms you may have such as headache, general aches and pains. You can buy paracetamol as soluble tablets to make swallowing easier, or as liquid for children. Ibuprofen may not be suitable for everyone – check with your pharmacist before starting.
- If you are a smoker, try to reduce the amount smoked as the chemicals and smoke irritation will make the symptoms worse.

What if your child has a sore throat – what can you do?

- Don't force your child to eat if he/she is ill and off their food. Give them extra drinks or ice lollies and runny food like yoghurt.
- Give paracetamol, and follow the dosage instructions carefully – paracetamol is available as a liquid for younger children.
- Remember not to give aspirin to any child under 16 years.

How can your community pharmacy help?

- Your pharmacy team can advise on which over the counter medicines would be best to help you manage your symptoms e.g. anaesthetic throat sprays or lozenges.
- Your pharmacist can also check that any medication for your sore throat does not interact with any medication you have been prescribed by your doctor.

When should you contact your medical practice for yourself, or your child?

Contact your medical practice for advice if you or your child has:

- Swallowing that becomes difficult as well as painful
- Throat pain which is becoming worse or one-sided
- Pus at the back of the throat (white spots on enlarged red tonsils)
- Difficulty breathing
- Persistent fever and feeling very unwell
- Symptoms that go on for more than 3-4 days
- Regular medication that you have been told may lower your immune system, for example; high dose steroids, chemotherapy, or have recently started a new drug.

You should contact your medical practice urgently:

If you are concerned that you or your child may be seriously unwell.

If a feeling of fullness or swelling starts in the throat.