

# Sore Throat

## Do I need an appointment?

Most people who have a sore throat **do not** need a medical appointment. Usually, a sore throat gets better on its own and does not need treatment. Sore throats can be caused by viruses or bacteria, if your sore throat seems consistent with strep throat (see below) then an appointment is needed.

## What causes a sore throat?

Sore throat is usually caused by an infection. Two types of germs can cause it: viruses and bacteria.

People who have a sore throat caused by a virus do not usually need to see a doctor or nurse. People who have a sore throat caused by bacteria might need to see a doctor or nurse. They might have a type of infection called strep throat.

## How do I know if it's Strep Throat?

People who have strep throat **do not** usually have a cough, runny nose, or itchy or red eyes. They might have:

- Severe throat pain
- Fever (temperature higher than 100.4°F, or 38°C)
- Swollen glands in the neck

If you think that you have strep throat, the doctor or nurse can easily check. They can take a sample from the back of your throat and test it for the bacteria that cause strep throat.

Only about 1 in 10 adults who seek medical care for sore throat have strep throat.

## Do I need antibiotics?

If you have strep throat, you should get antibiotics. Most people with strep throat get better without antibiotics, but providers often prescribe them. This is because antibiotics often can prevent other problems that might be caused by strep throat. Plus, they can reduce the symptoms of strep throat and prevent you from spreading it to other people.

## When to Call the WCFHT

Most people with a sore throat recover without medical care. However, if you or a person you care for have any of the following signs or symptoms, call us for advice.

- You think you have strep throat
- You have a fever of at least 100.4°F (38°C).
- Your throat pain is severe within the first 2 days, or does not start to improve within 5 to 7 days.
- You are having trouble getting enough to eat or drink.
- You got antibiotics but still have symptoms after finishing them

For children: Same as above and/or:

- Can't open their mouth all of the way
- Has a fever and a red rash like sandpaper on their body



Go to the Emergency Department (or call 911) if you or your child:

- Has trouble breathing
- Drooling because you cannot swallow your saliva
- Has swelling of your neck or tongue
- Cannot move your neck, or have trouble opening your mouth
- In children: Has a stiff or swollen neck

### **What can I do to feel better?**

- Take over-the-counter pain medicine – Acetaminophen (ie. Tylenol) or ibuprofen (ie. Advil, Motrin) can help with throat pain. Please consult your Pharmacist for the safest option prior to use if you take any other medications.
- Use medicated sore throat lozenges or sprays – These can temporarily reduce throat pain.
- Suck on hard candies, ice chips, or ice pops.
- Gargle with salt water – This can sometimes help with throat pain.
- Use a cool mist humidifier – This adds moisture to the air. Some people find that this helps.
- Avoid smoking or being around people who are smoking – Smoke can make throat pain worse.

#### **For Children:**

- Soothing foods and drinks – Give your child things that are easy to swallow, like tea or soup, or popsicles to suck on. Your child might not feel like eating or drinking, but it's important that they get enough liquids. Offer different warm and cold drinks for your child to try.
- Do not give children throat sprays or cough drops. Never give children Aspirin.
- Acetaminophen (ie. Tylenol) or ibuprofen (ie. Advil, Motrin) can help with throat pain. The correct dose depends on your child's weight, so ask your pharmacist how much to give.
- For children who are older than 4 to 5 years, sucking on hard candies or a lollipop might help.
- For children older than 6 to 8 years, gargling with warm salt water might help.

### **When can I go back to work or school?**

If you have strep throat, wait 1 day after starting antibiotics. By then, you will be a lot less likely to spread the infection to others.

If you have COVID-19, stay home from work or school while you are sick. Do not go to work or school until your fever has been gone for at least 24 hours without taking medicine such as acetaminophen.

If you have a sore throat that is not due to strep throat or COVID-19, you can go back to your usual activities as soon as you feel well. But it's still important to wash your hands often, cover your mouth if you cough and wear a mask when possible.

### **When can my child go back to school?**

If your child's sore throat is caused by a virus, they should be able to go back to school as soon as they feel better. If your child has a fever, they should stay home for at least 24 hours after the fever has gone away.

### **How can I prevent getting a sore throat again?**

Wash your hands often with soap and water. It is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of infection.

Teach your child about other ways to avoid spreading germs, such as not touching their face after being around a sick person.

### **If you do make an appointment to be seen by a Health Care Provider in office please ensure you:**

- Wear a mask, which we ask you to wear for the duration of your time in the office.
- Depending on your symptoms they may direct you to be seated in our isolation room where the provider will conduct your visit.
- Use hand sanitizer to sanitize hands throughout your visit. Hand sanitizer pumps are found throughout the office for patient use.
- Distance yourself from other patients in the waiting room as much as possible.