



Tonsillitis and sore throat

You came to the emergency department with a sore throat. The doctor examined you and thinks you have tonsillitis or a throat infection. You are well enough to go home. This sheet explains how to ease your symptoms and when to come back.

What is it?

Tonsillitis is an infection of the tonsils, the two lumps at the back of your throat. It causes a sore throat, pain when swallowing, fever and sometimes swollen glands in the neck. Most sore throats are caused by viruses and get better on their own within about a week. Antibiotics only help some bacterial infections, so your doctor may not prescribe them.

Looking after yourself at home

- Drink plenty of fluids, even if swallowing hurts. Cool drinks and ice lollies can soothe your throat.
- Eat soft foods that are easy to swallow, such as soup, yoghurt or porridge.
- Gargle with warm salty water a few times a day. Do not swallow it.
- Rest, and stay home from work or school until your fever has gone and you feel better.
- Wash your hands often and do not share cups or cutlery, to avoid spreading the infection.
- Do not smoke, and avoid smoky places.

Medicines

- Paracetamol can help with pain and fever, unless your doctor told you not to. Follow the packet or your doctor's instructions.
- Ibuprofen can also help, unless your doctor told you not to. Avoid it if you have a stomach ulcer, kidney disease, some asthma, or are pregnant.
- Throat lozenges or sprays from the pharmacy may ease the pain.
- If you were given antibiotics, take the full course as your doctor told you, even if you feel better.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor or health centre if you are not getting better after 1 week.
- See your doctor if you keep getting tonsillitis many times a year.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- Difficulty breathing, or noisy breathing
- You cannot swallow your own saliva, or you are drooling
- You cannot open your mouth fully, or one side of your throat is very swollen
- Your voice sounds muffled, as if you have something hot in your mouth
- You cannot drink enough and are passing very little urine
- A stiff neck, a rash that does not fade when pressed, or feeling very drowsy



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.
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