

Sore Throat



What is Sore Throat?

A sore throat (or throat pain) is pain or irritation of the throat. A common physical symptom, it is usually caused by acute pharyngitis (inflammation of the throat), although it can also appear as a result of trauma, diphtheria, or other conditions. A sore throat may cause mild to extreme pain.

Symptoms

If you have Sore throat you may have some of the following symptoms:

- swollen tonsils (two small glands found at the back of your throat, behind the tongue)
- enlarged and tender glands in your neck
- a painful, tender feeling at the back of your throat
- discomfort when swallowing

If you have a sore throat, you may also experience other symptoms associated with common infectious conditions, such as:

- a high temperature (fever) of 38C (100.4F) or over
- aching muscles
- a headache
- tiredness
- a cough
- a runny nose

These other symptoms will depend on what infection is causing your sore throat.

Complications

Sore Throat can cause complications such as:

- difficulty breathing
- a high-pitched sound as you breathe (stridor)
- drooling
- a muffled voice
- severe pain
- difficulty swallowing (dysphagia) or not being able to swallow enough fluids

Causes

Viral infection: This is by far the most common cause of a sore throat, and there are several different viruses that can lead to the common cold and an upper respiratory infection. Certain viruses such as the influenza virus (influenza, flu), Epstein-Barr virus (mononucleosis), mumps virus (mumps), parainfluenza virus (croup) and Coxsackie A virus (herpangina) also cause sore throat.

Bacterial infection: A less common cause of sore throat, a bacterial infection can lead to strep throat, peritonsillar abscess, retropharyngeal abscess, diphtheria, epiglottitis, and Sore throat. Certain sexually transmitted diseases (STD's), such as gonorrhea and chlamydia, also can rarely cause a sore throat.

Toxins/Irritants: Various substances such as a cigarette smoke, air pollution, and noxious airborne chemicals can lead to a sore throat. Medical conditions such as postnasal drip, allergies, cough, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), and tumors can cause a sore throat. The intentional or unintentional ingestion of certain substances (for example, bleach) can cause a sore throat.

Trauma/Injury: Any direct injury to the throat or neck area can lead to a sore throat. Sometimes, a foreign body (for example, a bone or piece of food) can cause a sore throat. Excessive yelling or screaming can irritate the throat and larynx, also leading to a sore throat.

Risk Factors for Sore throat

A sore throat is usually from irritation or inflammation. The most common cause (80%) is acute viral pharyngitis, a viral infection of the throat. Other causes include other infections (such as streptococcal pharyngitis), trauma, and tumors. Gastroesophageal (acid) reflux disease can cause stomach acid to back up into the throat and also cause the throat to become sore. In children streptococcal pharyngitis is the cause of 37% of sore throats.

Treatment

1.] Self-help

Your infection may be mild and you may not need treatment. There are several things you can do to help yourself feel better.

- Avoid food or drink that is too hot as this could irritate your throat.
- Eat cool, soft food and drink cool or warm liquids.
- Adults and older children can suck lozenges, hard sweets, ice cubes or ice lollies.
- Avoid smoking and smoky environments.

- Regularly gargle with a mouthwash of warm, salty water to reduce any swelling or pain.
- Drink enough fluids, especially if you have a high temperature (fever).

2.] Medicines

Benzydamine hydrochloride spray helps to relieve pain associated with sore throat. Before taking any medicines ask your pharmacist for advice. Follow the instructions in the patient information leaflet that comes with the medicine.

3.] Surgery

If you have sore throat more than five times a year or you have had symptoms for more than a year, and your sore throat stops you doing normal activities, your doctor may suggest you have your tonsils removed. This procedure is called a tonsillectomy. Before you choose this treatment you should discuss it with your doctor as the operation also has complications. As young children get older, throat infections occur less often so they may not need surgery.