

# SORE THROAT

## Introduction

A sore throat (pharyngitis) is normally a symptom of a bacterial or viral infection, such as the [common cold](#).

In around a third of cases, no cause for the sore throat can be found.



If you have a sore throat, you may also have:

- [swollen tonsils \(tonsillitis\)](#)
- enlarged and tender glands in your neck
- discomfort when swallowing

If your sore throat is caused by bacteria or a virus, you may also experience symptoms associated with common infectious conditions, such as:

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

## TREATING A SORE THROAT

Sore throats are common, especially in children and teenagers. This is because young people have not built up resistance (immunity) against many of the viruses and bacteria that can cause sore throats.



Most sore throats are not serious and usually pass without the need for medical treatment. Over-the-counter painkillers, such as [paracetamol](#) or [ibuprofen](#), and self-care tips can usually help to relieve the symptoms of a sore throat **without the need to see a GP**.

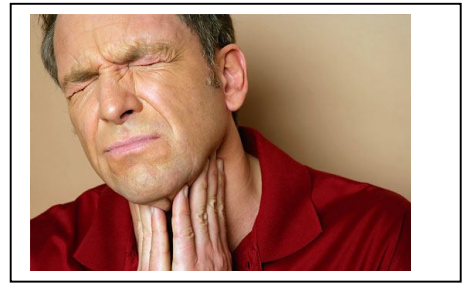
Antibiotics are **not** usually prescribed for a sore throat, unless it is particularly severe or you are considered at risk of a more serious infection.

Read more detailed information about [treating a sore throat](#).

## HOW LONG WILL A SORE THROAT LAST?

A sore throat is likely to last between 7 to 10 days.

## SORE THROAT



### SELF-CARE TIPS

If you or someone in your family has a sore throat, the tips below may help relieve the symptoms:

- avoid food or drink that is too hot, as this could irritate the 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 gargling with a mouthwash of warm, salty water may help reduce swelling or pain
- drink enough fluids, especially if you have a fever

Steam inhalation is not recommended, as it's unlikely to help a sore throat and there is a risk of scalding.

### NON-INFECTIOUS CAUSES

In some cases, a sore throat may be caused by substances that irritate the throat. Sources can include:

- alcohol
- cigarette smoke
- an [allergy](#) – such as [hay fever](#)

You may find that avoiding these substances, or seeking treatment for an [allergy](#) or COPD, can help to reduce symptoms of a sore throat.