



# Sore throats



## TRIAGE QUESTIONS



Do you have severe shortness of breath? Or, can you not swallow your own saliva?

**NO**  
↓

**YES** ➔ **GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE**



With sore throat, do you have a fever higher than 102°F, swollen neck glands, ear pain, bad breath, a skin rash, and/or dark urine? Or, does the back of your throat or tonsils look bright red or have pus? Or, is there blood in your saliva or phlegm?

**NO**  
↓

**YES** ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



Have you been in contact with someone who had strep throat in the last 2 weeks, do you get strep throat often, or has a mild sore throat lasted longer than 3 weeks?

**NO**  
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**YES** ➔ **CALL DOCTOR**



## USE SELF-CARE

## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Dry, irritated throat.
- Soreness or pain in the throat, especially when you talk or swallow. Swollen neck glands.
- The back of the throat and/or the tonsils look bright red or have pus deposits or white spots.
- Enlarged tonsils that feel tender (tonsillitis)

Fatigue, fever, postnasal drip, bad breath, headache, and/or earache can also occur.

## CAUSES

- Smoking. Secondhand smoke. Dry air. Postnasal drip. Cough. Allergies.
- Viruses, such as with a cold or the flu.
- Infection from bacteria, such as strep throat.

## TREATMENT

Self-care treats most sore throats. Your doctor may take a throat culture to see if strep or another type of bacteria is the cause. If so, an antibiotic may be prescribed. Strep throat needs medical care to prevent other health problems. Sore throats caused by viruses **do not** need an antibiotic.

## SELF-CARE / PREVENTION

- Don't smoke. Avoid secondhand smoke.
- Gargle every few hours with a solution of 1/4 teaspoon of salt dissolved in 1 cup of warm water. Don't eat spicy foods.
- Sit in the bathroom while hot water runs in the shower.
- Use a clean humidifier or cool mist vaporizer.
- Drink plenty of fluids like warm tea. For strep throat, have cold foods and liquids.
- Suck on a piece of hard candy or throat lozenge every so often. (Don't give to children under age 5.) Rest your voice, if this helps.
- Take an over-the-counter (OTC) medicine for pain as directed on the label. Take an OTC decongestant for postnasal drip, if okay with your doctor.