

SORE THROATS



Sore throats can be very unpleasant, but will generally resolve without antibiotic treatment. At day 3 of a sore throat, around 40% of patients will be symptom free; and at day 7, 88% of patients will be symptom free whether the symptoms are caused by a viral or bacterial infection.

By far the majority of sore throat symptoms (including tonsillitis or pharyngitis) are caused by viruses and these **will not be helped by antibiotics**. However, even if antibiotics are given for a sore throat caused by bacteria, antibiotics have very little effect on the duration of symptoms, and will reduce the total time of illness **by less than one day**.

We should all be cautious about over-using antibiotics as many bacteria are becoming resistant to antibiotics. This means that they are less likely to work when you really need them in future.

Swabbing sore throats is not usually helpful as it doesn't tell us if any bacteria present is the cause of your symptoms or if they are harmless bacteria that are routinely present in the throat.

Sore throats can be very painful and it is very important to rest, take plenty of fluid and use regular pain relief whether or not antibiotics are prescribed. Antibiotics will not relieve pain especially in the early part of treatment. Your **pharmacist** can advise on the most appropriate pain relief for you. This is very important to keep you comfortable and so you can continue to eat and drink adequately.

SELF CARE TIPS

- 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

Please seek urgent medical advice if you are taking any medicine that suppresses your immune system or if you have an illness that does not allow your immune system to work properly.

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/ears-nose-and-throat/sore-throat>