



Information for Patients and Carers

Sore throats and tonsillitis

Sore throats are very common in children of all ages. At the back of your throat are two small bumps called tonsils. Sometimes they can get swollen and sore too. This is called tonsillitis.

Sore throats and tonsillitis are usually caused by a tiny germ called a virus. Most children get better on their own in a few days, but it can last around a week.

Signs your child might have a sore throat or tonsillitis

Your child may have:

- Swollen, red and sore tonsils
- Pain when swallowing
- Swollen or painful glands in their neck
- A temperature of 38°C or higher (a fever)

Some children also get a runny or blocked nose, earache and a cough.

How to help your child feel better

You can help by:

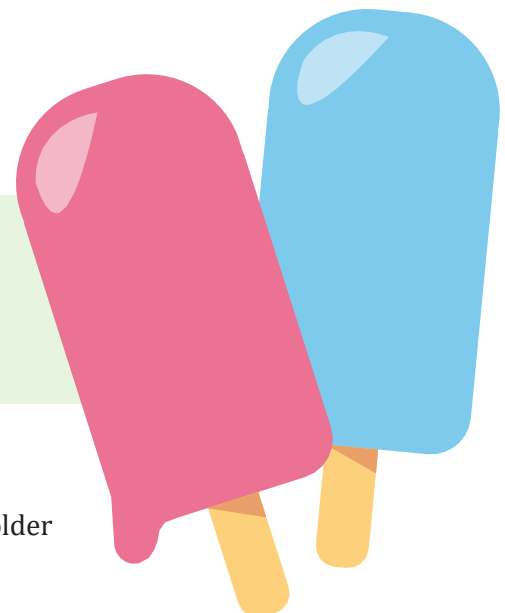
- Giving them plenty to drink
- Try cool drinks or ice lollies if their throat hurts
- Give them children's paracetamol or ibuprofen for pain or fever

Do **not** give aspirin to children under 16 years old.

Your local pharmacist can also help. They can see children who are 5 years or older with sore throats, as well as give helpful treatments like throat sprays.



Watch this NHS video to learn more about sore throats and tonsillitis in children, and how to get help if you are worried



When should I be worried and what should I do?



RED

You need urgent help.

- Has fast breathing or is struggling to breathe
- Has blue lips
- Cannot speak or swallow at all or is drooling
- Cannot open their mouth fully
- Has swelling on one side of their throat or neck
- Becomes pale, mottled or cold to touch
- Becomes confused, extremely agitated or very sleepy
- Has a seizure or fit
- Has a rash that does not go away with pressure (the glass test)
- Is under 3 months of age with a temperature of 38°C or above (a fever)

Please attend your local Emergency Department or call 999



AMBER

- Pus-filled spots or white patches on their tonsils
- A sore throat so painful they cannot eat or drink
- Signs of dehydration (dry lips, sunken eyes or has not passed urine for 12 hours)
- Your child becomes irritable or drowsy (excessively sleepy)
- Fever of 38°C or above for 5 or more days
- Is shivering or complaining of muscle pain
- Seems to be getting worse, or you are worried

Please ring your GP or 111 for advice

Does my child need antibiotics?

Most children with a sore throat or tonsillitis do not need antibiotics because antibiotics do not work on viruses. Unnecessary antibiotics can also cause unpleasant side effects like diarrhoea or a rash.

However, sometimes tonsillitis are caused by a bacteria, such as group A streptococcus (GAS) and the doctor or pharmacist may decide antibiotics are needed. If your child has any of the red or amber flags above they need to be seen urgently.

You can get help from NHS 111:

- By using 111 online (if your child is 5 years old or older)
- By calling 111 – you can ask for an interpreter
- By Text Relay – call 18001 111 using text relay, 24 hours a day
- By using signvideo.co.uk/nhs111 if you need British Sign Language



111



To access more about this and to be able to read this in different languages, please visit our Paediatric Emergency Department webpage on <https://mft.nhs.uk/sore-throats-and-tonsillitis/>

