

Sore Throat (Pharyngitis/Tonsillitis)

Pharyngitis is inflammation of the back of the throat or pharynx. Tonsillitis is inflammation of the tonsils. Tonsils normally help prevent infection in the sinuses, mouth, and throat from spreading to other body parts. Infection of the tonsils can be caused by bacteria such as strep or by a number of viruses. Occasionally, the tonsils are not swollen but the throat looks red.

Frequent signs and symptoms:

- Throat pain that can be mild to severe
- Discomfort with swallowing
- Chills and fever greater than 100.4 F with or without headache
- **Swollen lymph glands on either side of the neck and/or jaw**
- Ear pain (the pain from the throat may be referred into the ears)
- **Tonsils that may be swollen with or without a white coating or spots**

Treatment:

Self-care measures can be tried for 48 hours; however, if the symptoms do not begin to improve or you have a fever of **100.4 F** degrees or greater, make an appointment with a health care provider.

A **strep test** should be done to determine if the inflamed tonsils (sore throat) is being caused by Strep A bacteria. A rapid strep test can be done in the Student Health Clinic for a small fee. Results are available within 5 to 10 minutes. Sore throats caused by strep will be treated with self-care measures listed below, as well as an antibiotic. If you are female using birth control, use a back-up method (condoms) until next period any time you take an antibiotic.

Viral sore throats are treated by self-care measures to relieve the discomfort. Viral sore throats usually resolve within 2 to 5 days. **Antibiotics are not effective against viruses.**

Self-Care Measures:

- Drink plenty of fluids (8 to 10 glasses daily).
- Drink warm beverages, such as tea, to help soothe the throat. Honey in the tea may also be soothing.
- Gargle with warm salt water as often as possible. Mix 1/4 teaspoon of salt into 8 ounces of warm water.
- Lozenges, hard candies, etc. may be soothing.
- Ibuprofen per package dosing instructions to reduce inflammation and decrease pain.
- If you are allergic to aspirin, use Acetaminophen (Tylenol) per package dosing instructions.
- **If your tonsils are red and pustular, with swollen glands and fever, make an appointment to see a health care provider.**

Your health care provider may recommend the following medications to help alleviate your cold and flu symptoms. ** Follow the recommended dosage on the package label **

- Pseudoephedrine (Sudafed) during the daytime hours. Pseudoephedrine is a decongestant and usually does not cause drowsiness. However, if you take this drug at bedtime, it may keep you awake. Need to obtain at pharmacy counter. Must be 18 years old and have your driver's license. You should not take this type of medication if you have high blood pressure.
- Nasal steroid sprays (Flonase, Nasacort, Nasonex) decreases congestion. Use once daily for at least one week or until symptoms resolve.

- Daytime antihistamine such as Claritin/loratadine, Zyrtec/cetirizine and Allegra/fexofenadine may be purchased over the counter at a local store. These medications will decrease mucous production which will also decrease coughing and runny nose.
- Saline nasal sprays help to decrease congestion by liquefying mucous, and this promotes sinus drainage with pain relief. Squirt saline spray into each nostril 3 to 4 times a day.*
- At bedtime, instead of taking pseudoephedrine, use an antihistamine such as Diphenhydramine (Benadryl). Antihistamines usually produce drowsiness and tend to dry post-nasal drip helping to decrease nighttime coughing. Do not use this drug on a regular basis for it may make the mucus thick and worsen blockage of the sinus drainage passages. A key factor to recovery is the drainage of the infected mucous from the sinuses. Maximum dose not to exceed 300 mg in 24 hours. Use caution while driving due to drowsiness
- Ibuprofen (Advil), with food, as needed or Acetaminophen (Tylenol) as needed, to alleviate the pain.
- Guaifenesin Dextromethorphan (DM) (Robitussin DM, Mucinex DM) cough syrup as needed for cough.

***Proper Use of Nasal Sprays:**

Nasal sprays point toward the ear (same ear as the nostril you're spraying) not toward center of nose. Use saline sprays prior to prescription nasal sprays then do not use saline spray for 1 hour.

Please call to make an appointment at your on-campus Student Health Clinic or with your PCP or go to Urgent Care or the Emergency Department if your concerns do not improve with conservative self-care treatment or if you have worsening symptoms.

Please know your health problem and allergies. Information contained in this handout is for educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for evaluation and treatment by a Healthcare professional. As new and updated information becomes available, the content may change. Please contact your Healthcare Provider or the on-campus Student Health Services Clinic with any questions.

Sore Throat self care handout

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