



# Sore Throat

Patient information leaflet



GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES



Common Ailments Service

**Only use this leaflet if your pharmacist has advised you about your or your child's condition.**

Sore throats are very common and are usually caused by viral or bacterial infections. They normally get better on their own within a week.

There may be other symptoms alongside a sore throat, such as:

- a dry, scratchy throat
- a mild cough
- bad breath
- swollen glands in the neck
- pain when swallowing
- tiredness
- a high temperature



## Treatment and Prevention

Most sore throats get better without antibiotics. There are some things you can do to help ease your symptoms.

### Lifestyle advice

To look after yourself:

- rest
- drink plenty of water
- eat cool and soft foods (hot drinks can make the pain worse)
- stay home if you have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to do your everyday activities
- avoid smoking and smoky environments

### At-home remedies

To help relieve the pain in your throat, adults and older children can:

- suck on medicated throat lozenges (ask your pharmacist if you are unsure which are suitable for you)
- suck on hard sweets, ice cubes or ice lollies
- gargle, then spit out salty water (made with half a teaspoon of salt dissolved in a glass of warm water)



## Treatment and Prevention

### Medicines that can help

**These medicines are not suitable for everyone. Make sure you have asked your pharmacist for advice about what treatment is best for you or your child.**

### Symptom relief

Your pharmacist may recommend **paracetamol** or **ibuprofen** to help reduce your temperature and make your throat hurt less.

### Antibiotics

If your pharmacist thinks that your infection is caused by bacteria they may recommend a course of antibiotics. Antibiotics work by killing bacteria but often your body can clear the infection by itself within a week and you will not need an antibiotic. This is preferred because antibiotics have side effects such as diarrhoea, feeling sick and rashes. Taking antibiotics when they are not really needed can make the bacteria more resistant to them so the antibiotics may not work well in future if you really do need them.

The antibiotics normally prescribed for a sore throat are **phenoxymethylpenicillin** or **amoxicillin**. If you are allergic to penicillin, your pharmacist may suggest **clarithromycin** or **erythromycin**. All of the antibiotics come as tablets or oral liquids. Space the doses evenly throughout the day and complete the prescribed course.

If you take antibiotics and do not feel better after 3 to 4 days, contact your GP.

If your pharmacist has suggested that the sore throat should get better without antibiotics, return to the pharmacy after 7 days if your sore throat is still there, or within 2 days if you start to feel more unwell. Check the 'when to get help' section below for what to do if you start to develop more serious symptoms.

### **Always read the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine.**

If you are concerned about any side effects from a treatment, report it to a doctor, nurse or pharmacist. You can also report side effects on the Yellow Card [app](#) or [website](#).



## When to Get Help

### Contact your GP if you:

- have symptoms that have not improved after 7 days
- often have sore throats

### Call 111 or contact your GP urgently if you:

- are not able to drink enough water or have signs of dehydration (dark yellow, smelly pee, peeing less often than usual and feeling thirsty, dizzy or tired)
- are breathing in a way that is different for you (if you are struggling to breathe call 999 or go to A&E)
- have a rash, flushed cheeks and a swollen tongue
- have a temperature over 38°C that does not go down with paracetamol or ibuprofen
- have a severe headache and are sick
- are feeling a lot worse
- cough up blood
- have a weakened immune system, for example from cancer treatment or steroid therapy

### Call 999 or go to A&E if you:

- have difficulty breathing – look for
  - breathing quickly
  - turning blue around the lips and the skin below the mouth
  - the skin between or above the ribs getting sucked or pulled in with every breath
- have sudden chest pain that feels heavy and tight or spreads to your neck, jaw shoulder or back
- have difficulty swallowing or are drooling
- have difficulty speaking or opening your mouth
- have a muffled voice
- are making an unusual high-pitched sound when breathing (stridor)
- have skin that is very cold, a strange colour or has a rash
- have severe symptoms that are getting worse fast

**If you are worried that your or your child's condition is not getting better, or is getting worse, talk to your GP.**



## More information

For more information on sore throats or a medicine, talk to your pharmacist or look at the following websites:

NHS 111 Wales: <https://111.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/s/article/sorethroat?locale=en&term=A>

Patient UK: <https://patient.info/ears-nose-throat-mouth/sore-throat-2>

Medicines A-Z: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/>

Information from the above resources is included in this leaflet.



Mae'r daflen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This leaflet is also available in Welsh.

Version: 1 Published: May 2023

All images taken from Getty Images & Canva Pro



**GCFC | WMAS**

Gwasanaeth Cyngor ar Feddygiaethau Cymru  
Welsh Medicines Advice Service