

UAB Health Education

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

PHARYNGITIS (SORE THROAT)



A sore throat is pain, scratchiness, or irritation of the throat, often worsened with swallowing or speaking. The most common cause is a viral infection, such as a cold, influenza or mononucleosis. Strep throat is a less common type of sore throat due to a streptococcal bacterial infection. It usually is accompanied by a fever, lack of cough and swollen lymph nodes. Other causes include allergies, dryness in the air, irritants such as pollution, muscle strain from yelling or talking loudly for long periods and acid reflux.

DIAGNOSIS

Often based on symptoms and physical exam. Your provider will examine your ears, nose and neck, and look at the back of your throat. They may also swab the area.

- The swab is used for a rapid strep test which will quickly diagnose strep throat.
- They may also use the swab for a throat culture to collect a sample of bacteria. Culture results will take 24-48 hours.
- If your pharyngitis is prolonged or associated with extreme fatigue your provider may perform a Monospot test to test for mononucleosis.

TREATMENT

If your sore throat is caused by bacteria, your provider will prescribe antibiotics. It is important to complete the full course of antibiotics per the instructions on the package.

Most sore throats caused by the cold or influenza will go away on their own after a week.

For symptomatic relief:

- Gargle salt water (1/4 tsp salt in 4-8 oz warm water)
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Get some rest
- Use a humidifier
- Suck on throat lozenges or hard candy, eat a popsicle
- Take over-the-counter pain medicine such as Acetaminophen (Tylenol), Naproxen, or Ibuprofen (Motrin, Aleve)
- Stop smoking and avoid smoke exposure

CALL STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES IF:

- Persistent temperature greater than 100.4
- Severe headache
- Increased facial swelling/very large neck glands
- Significant increase in pain, especially one sided
- Painful joints, skin rash
- Chest pain, shortness of breath
- Difficulty swallowing saliva, muffled voice

RESOURCES

FamilyDoctor.org <https://familydoctor.org/condition/sore-throat/>

Mayo Clinic <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/sore-throat/symptoms-causes/syc-20351635>

SYMPTOMS

- Pain or scratchy sensation in throat
- Pain worsens with swallowing or speaking
- Difficulty swallowing
- Sore, swollen glands in neck or jaw
- Swollen, red tonsils, white patches on tonsils

RISK FACTORS

- Exposure to tobacco smoke or chemical irritants
- Seasonal allergies
- Frequent or chronic sinus infections
- Living in close quarters such as dorms
- Weakened immune system

PREVENTION

- Eat healthy foods, exercise, get adequate sleep
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Wash hands frequently with soap, avoid touching eyes/mouth, cough/sneeze into your elbow
- Clean common surfaces such as counters and doorknobs with antibacterial disinfectant
- Avoid cigarette smoke and polluted air
- Use a humidifier to moisten the air



STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

The University of Alabama at Birmingham

Clinic: 205-934-3580

After Hours: 205-934-3411

<https://www.uab.edu/students/health/>

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