

Sore Throat (Pharyngitis)

A sore throat is pain, scratchiness or irritation of the throat that often worsens when you swallow.

A sore throat is the primary symptom of pharyngitis — inflammation of the throat (pharynx). But the terms "sore throat" and "pharyngitis" are often used interchangeably.

The most common cause of a sore throat is a viral infection, such as a cold or the flu. A sore throat caused by a virus resolves on its own with at-home care. Strep throat (streptococcal infection), a less common type of sore throat caused by bacteria, requires additional treatment with antibiotic drugs to prevent complications.

Symptoms of a sore throat may vary depending on the cause. Signs and symptoms may include:

- Pain or a scratchy sensation in the throat
- Pain that worsens with swallowing or talking
- Sore, swollen glands in your neck or jaw
- Swollen, red tonsils
- White patches or pus on your tonsils
- Cough
- Chills/Fever
- Runny nose
- Headache/Body aches
- Nausea or vomiting

Lifestyle and home remedies

- Rest. Get plenty of sleep and rest your voice.
- Drink fluids. Drink plenty of water to keep the throat moist and prevent dehydration.
- Try comforting foods and beverage. Warm liquids — broth, caffeine-free tea or warm water with honey — and cold treats such as ice pops can soothe a sore throat.
- Gargle saltwater. A saltwater gargle of 1 teaspoon (5 grams) of table salt to 8 ounces (237 milliliters) of warm water can help soothe a sore throat. Gargle the solution and then spit it out.
- Humidify the air. Use a cool-air humidifier to eliminate dry air that may further irritate a sore throat or sit for several minutes in a steamy bathroom.
- Consider lozenges. Lozenges can soothe a sore throat. Because lozenges are a choking hazard for young children, don't give them to children age 4 and younger.
- Avoid irritants. Keep your home free from cigarette smoke and cleaning products that can irritate the throat.
- Treat pain and fever. Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB, others) or acetaminophen (Tylenol, others) may minimize throat pain. Aspirin has been linked with Reye's syndrome, so use caution when giving aspirin to children or teenagers. Though aspirin is approved for use in children older than age 2, children and teenagers recovering from chickenpox or flu-like symptoms should never take aspirin. Talk to your doctor if you have concerns.

*By Mayo Clinic Staff