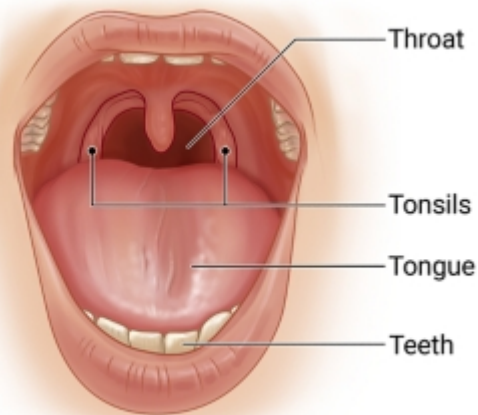


# Sore Throat: Care Instructions



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## Overview

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Infection by bacteria or a virus causes most sore throats. Cigarette smoke, dry air, air pollution, allergies, and yelling can also cause a sore throat. Sore throats can be painful and annoying. Fortunately, most sore throats go away on their own. If you have a bacterial infection, your doctor may prescribe antibiotics.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

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- If your doctor prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.
- Gargle with warm salt water several times a day to help reduce swelling and relieve pain. Mix 1/2 teaspoon of salt in 1 cup of warm water.
- Take an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve). Read and follow all instructions on the label.
- Be careful when taking over-the-counter cold or flu medicines and Tylenol at the same time. Many of these medicines have acetaminophen, which is Tylenol. Read the labels to make sure that you are not taking more than the recommended dose. Too much acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be harmful.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Fluids may help soothe an irritated throat. Hot fluids, such as tea or soup, may help decrease throat pain.
- Use over-the-counter throat lozenges to soothe pain. Regular cough drops or hard candy may also help. These should not be given to young children because of the risk of choking.
- Do not smoke or allow others to smoke around you. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.
- Use a vaporizer or humidifier to add moisture to your bedroom. Follow the directions for cleaning the machine.

## When should you call for help?

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**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have trouble breathing.
- Your sore throat gets much worse on one side.
- You have new or worse trouble swallowing.
- You have a new or higher fever.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if you do not get better as expected.

### Where can you learn more?

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Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/PatientEd>

Enter **U420** in the search box to learn more about "**Sore Throat: Care Instructions**".

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