

# Sore Throat

Most sore throats are caused by viruses (the same viruses that cause the common cold). **Antibiotics do not affect viruses and do not make a viral sore throat go away.** Your body naturally will fight the infection off over 3-10 days.

Strep throat is a bacterial infection of the throat caused by a bacteria known as "Group A Strep". Strep throat causes less than 20% of all sore throats. A person with Strep throat will usually have a fever, enlarged beefy-red tonsils with pus on them, and swollen tender lymph nodes in the neck. Strep throat can be treated with antibiotics (usually penicillin or erythromycin).

Strep throat does not usually cause any serious medical problems; although very rarely (about 1 in 100,000) people who have strep throat later develop a serious illness called rheumatic fever. Early treatment with antibiotics can help reduce the chance of getting rheumatic fever.

Based on your symptoms, your doctor may do a rapid strep test to check for Strep throat.

## **If you have a viral sore throat:**

1. Antibiotics will not help you feel better. They do not affect viral infections.
2. To soothe your sore throat, try gargling with warm salt water every 4 hours, use throat lozenges or cough drops, or try having some warm drinks.
3. Take Tylenol every 4 hours (No aspirin for anyone under 18 years old!)
4. If you develop a high fever, are unable to swallow any liquids, or if you see pus (white splotches) on your tonsils, come back to the clinic or emergency room for a recheck.

## **If you have Strep throat:**

1. Your doctor will treat you with either a shot of penicillin or with pills. Both are equally effective. **It is very important that you take all of the antibiotic pills even though you may feel better before they are done.**
2. if you feel worse with more throat pain, higher fever, or are unable to swallow any liquids, come back to clinic or the emergency room for a recheck.

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