

SORE THROAT

Sore throat

Sore throats are very common and usually nothing to worry about. They normally get better within a week. Most are caused by minor illnesses such as colds or flu and can be treated at home.

Very rarely, a sore throat can be a sign of a serious problem. Visit your nearest accident and emergency (A&E) department or call 999 for an ambulance immediately if:

- your symptoms are severe or getting worse quickly
- you have difficulty breathing
- you're making a high-pitched sound as you breathe (called stridor)
- you have difficulty swallowing
- you start drooling

Treatments for a sore throat

The following measures can often help soothe a sore throat:

- take ibuprofen or paracetamol – paracetamol is better for children and for people who can't take ibuprofen (note that children under 16 should never take aspirin)
- drink plenty of cool or warm fluids, and avoid very hot drinks
- eat cool, soft foods
- avoid smoking and smoky places
- adults can try gargling with a homemade mouthwash of warm, salty water (not recommended for children)
- suck lozenges, hard sweets, ice cubes or ice lollies – but don't give young children anything small and hard to suck because of the risk of choking

There are also products such as medicated lozenges and sprays sold in pharmacies that you may want to try. There isn't much scientific evidence to suggest they help, although some people find them worth using.

Antibiotics aren't usually prescribed for a sore throat, even if it's caused by a bacterial infection, as they're unlikely to make you feel better any quicker and they can have unpleasant side effects.