

Viruses cause many common infections. Antibiotics do not kill viruses only bacteria. Many infections caused by bacteria get better without an antibiotic.

We must not take antibiotics unnecessarily. This is because:

- Healthy people can fight off lots of infections caused by bacteria without the need for antibiotics. In fact we now know that many infections get better just as quickly without an antibiotic.
- If antibiotics are overused there is a risk of common bacteria becoming resistant. This means that antibiotics might not be as effective when they are really needed.
- Viruses cause most of the coughs and sore throats, cold and flu but antibiotics do not kill viruses.
- Antibiotics can have unpleasant side effects such as thrush, diarrhoea, rashes or feeling sick.

Some bacterial infections **do** need antibiotics but your doctor is skilled at checking you over to rule out serious infection.

MANAGING your SORE THROAT

Sore Throats are very common and are usually due to a virus. Infections with bacteria are less common. Soreness in the throat may be the only symptom or it may develop if you have a cold or flu-like illness.

- You may also have a hoarse voice, mild cough, fever, headache, feel tired or sick.
- Sometimes it may be painful to swallow and the glands in your neck may swell.
- Symptoms usually get worse over 2 to 3 days and then gradually go, usually within a week.
- Your tonsils may be red and swollen and sometimes have pus on them (tonsillitis).

SORE THROAT



MANAGING YOUR SORE THROAT

Most sore throats and tonsil infections (tonsillitis) get better on their own in people who are normally fit and well. Your body's own defence system will fight off the infection quickly and antibiotics are not thought to help your symptoms get better any faster.

Here are some things you can do to make yourself feel better.

- Drink plenty of water or soft drinks
- Take paracetamol and/or ibuprofen, according to the instructions on the packet, to bring down your temperature or to ease pain
- Aspirin gargles may ease the soreness for people who are able to take aspirin. Dissolve one or two soluble 300mg aspirin tablets in water and gargle for 3 to 4 minutes. You can do this 3 to 4 times a day. **(You should not give aspirin to children under 16 years)**
- Speak to your local pharmacist about other remedies you can safely take for your symptoms.

Consult a doctor if there are symptoms causing you concern or if:

- The symptoms are severe or have not eased after 3 to 4 days
- You take medicines which may cause sore throats as a side-effect, for example: sulphasalazine, methotrexate or carbimazole (*if in doubt ask your local pharmacist or check the patient information leaflet with your medicine*)
- Your immune system is not working properly, for example if you have had your spleen removed or if you are on medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy
- You have a history of a tonsil abscess (quinsy) or rheumatic fever
- You have frequent attacks, for example 5 or more episodes in 12 months.

