



SORE THROAT

Acute pharyngitis and tonsillitis

Sore throats are usually caused by inflammation of the throat and tonsils, most commonly due to a virus. Sometimes they are caused by bacteria. COVID-19 may need consideration in people with these symptoms below:



What does it feel like?

Your **throat will hurt** and you might experience **pain swallowing**, a **hoarse voice** and **fever**.



What can I do to feel better?

Sore throats usually get better on their own within 7 days. **Paracetamol** and **ibuprofen**, **warm drinks**, **honey** or **cough lozenges** may relieve your symptoms. Avoid anything that further irritates the throat, such as cigarette smoke. Speak to your doctor or pharmacist for more advice.



Will antibiotics help?

Antibiotics are not usually needed. Sometimes your doctor may recommend antibiotics if your symptoms are severe or prolonged or if you are in a high-risk group (see below). Taking antibiotics when you don't need them can lead to the bacteria becoming resistant to that antibiotic. When bacteria become resistant to an antibiotic, the antibiotic no longer works.



What can I do to stop it spreading?

Infections can spread to others when you cough, sneeze or blow your nose. **Cover your mouth with your elbow when you cough or sneeze**, **wash your hands** regularly, **dispose of tissues after use** and **stay away from crowded places while unwell**.



Do I need to see a doctor?

See your doctor immediately if you have **trouble breathing**, **vomiting**, **shaking chills** or **rash**, or if you are **having difficulty swallowing**. **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living in rural or remote settings**, **Maori and Pacific Islanders** and those with **rheumatic heart disease** should see a doctor as they are at a higher risk for bacterial infection and may require antibiotics. See your doctor if you have **other medical conditions**, are feeling very unwell, or are concerned.

COVID-19 is caused by a virus, and it can cause cough, runny nose, and sore throat. People with these symptoms should be tested for COVID-19 and should isolate until test results are known. For information go to health.gov.au/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19

This information sheet was developed by the National Centre for Antimicrobial Stewardship and the University of Melbourne. Information sheets on other common infections can be found at <https://www.ncas-australia.org/community-information-sheets>.

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