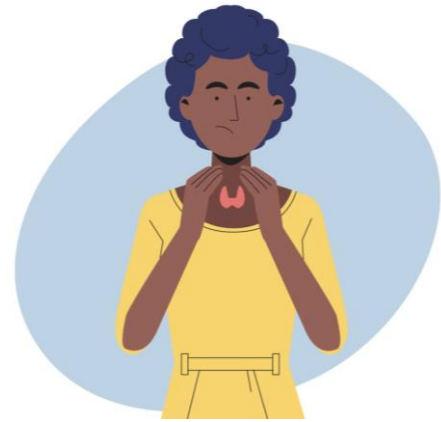


# Sore Throat (Tonsillitis)

Maybe your sore throat (also called “pharyngitis” or “tonsillitis”) started with a tickle in the back of your throat. Now that tickle is painful, and the throat is often red and swollen. It is either a sign of illness or the result of something in the environment that is irritating your throat.

Most people catch a sore throat if they have had contact with an individual who is sick, or if they have touched something that has been contaminated by a sick individual. Most sore throats are caused by viruses. However, about 20% of sore throats are caused by bacteria (i.e., strep throat), and in these cases antibiotics are usually required. To determine whether the infection is strep throat, a swab of your throat will confirm results in 2-3 days.

Other causes include allergic reactions, irritation from smoking/vaping, alcohol use, or chemical fumes.



## What to Expect

Depending on the cause of your sore throat, you may also have a fever, swelling in your neck glands, a runny nose, a cough, itchy eyes, or voice hoarseness.

Most of the time, a sore throat isn't a serious medical issue. Most sore throats go away within a week or so. You may need antibiotics if your sore throat stems from a bacterial infection.

### Recommended Follow-Up

Follow up in \_\_ days.

Name of Provider

Reason

Date/Time

Location

Contact Info

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## When to Get Help

**Go to the nearest Emergency Department or Urgent Care Centre if:**

- You develop increased throat pain, drooling, or difficulty breathing.
- You cannot swallow water or saliva.
- You develop a fever that is not improving.
- You develop a stiff neck or a new red rash.

**To Learn More Ask:**

- Your health care provider.
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca)



## How to Care for Yourself at Home

### **Rest and Remedies**

- Drink lots of fluids.
- Get lots of rest.
- Rest your voice.
- Gargle with a mouthwash or warm salt water (1/2-1 teaspoon of salt in 1 cup of warm water) several times a day.
- Suck on throat lozenges, hard candy, or drink cool fluids to ease the irritation.
- Use a cool mist humidifier (vaporizer) to increase air moisture. This helps relieve the tight, dry feeling in your throat. **DO NOT** use hot steam.
- **DO NOT** smoke (avoid second-hand smoke) or drink alcoholic beverages while your throat is sore.
- Try eating only soft foods or drinking liquids to give you comfort.
- **DO NOT** share eating utensils while your throat is sore.

If you have been diagnosed with mononucleosis (“mono”), which is caused by the Epstein-Barr virus, you will likely be very tired and weak for the next 7-8 weeks. If you have mono, it is important to avoid all contact sports. This is because the virus can cause swelling of your liver and spleen, which makes the organs more vulnerable to injury.

### **Medication**

- If you have been told to take medications, follow the instructions carefully. Check the bottle of the medication you have purchased for instructions.
- Even if you are prescribed antibiotics, they do not treat pain.



## Sore Throat Discharge Instructions - continued

### IBUPROFEN (E.G., ADVIL<sup>®</sup>, MOTRIN<sup>®</sup>)

- 200-400 mg every 6-8 hours as needed for pain while awake, taken with small snack (max: 1200mg/day).
- Avoid taking this medication for longer than 5-7 days. See your primary care provider if you need to use this for longer.
- Avoid this medication if you are >65 years old, pregnant, or have the following conditions: severe liver or kidney disease, peptic ulcer disease, or heart failure. Speak to your primary care provider before taking this if you have a history of stroke, GERD, inflammatory bowel disease, liver cirrhosis, or ischemic vascular disease.

### ACETAMINOPHEN (E.G., TYLENOL<sup>®</sup>)

- 500-1000 mg every 4-6 hours as needed for pain while awake, with water (max: 4000mg/day).

If you have liver disease or drink over 3 alcoholic beverages per day:

- Maximum dose: 3000mg per day.
- Do not use this medicine for longer than 5-7 days. Speak to your primary care provider if you need to use this for longer.

Be careful not to exceed the maximum dose when taking this medication with other medication that contain acetaminophen (e.g., Dayquil/Nyquil<sup>®</sup>).

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Find this information sheet on the ECBC website:  
[https://emergencycarebc.ca/clinical\\_resource/patient-information-sheet/sore-throat/](https://emergencycarebc.ca/clinical_resource/patient-information-sheet/sore-throat/)

The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team. This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.

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**EMERGENCY CARE BC**  
Provincial Health Services Authority

[EmergencyCareBC.ca](https://EmergencyCareBC.ca)

## Notes:

## Additional Information

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Have feedback about this document? Use the form at:  
[bit.ly/pdsfeedback](https://bit.ly/pdsfeedback)

