

Sore throats

What causes sore throats? Almost all sore throats are caused by viruses, related to the cold virus. Only a small number are caused by bacteria. This is why we often get other symptoms together with a sore throat, such as fever, headache, runny or blocked nose, aching body and a cough. The viruses that cause colds, sore throats, ear aches and dry coughs are all very similar, and can have very similar symptoms.

What should I do? If you have a sore throat, it's important to

- drink plenty of fluids
- rest when you are tired
- reduce cigarettes, tea and coffee (they dry your throat more)
- take *regular* doses of a good painkiller
 - Paracetamol and Ibuprofen are good - and cheap
 - Soluble Aspirin gargles are very good - and cheap
 - always read the label of medicines you buy
 - and **take the dose regularly** until you're better - don't wait for the pain to come back before the next dose, take it as advised on the packet

Most sore throats last between a day and a week - so it's important to continue looking after yourself.

Should I see the doctor? Because antibiotics don't work for almost all sore throats, there is usually no point in seeing the doctor or nurse. All they are able to do for most patients is give the above advice. However, it is worth phoning for advice if you have the following:

- very high fever, not reduced by Paracetamol or Ibuprofen
- difficulty breathing
- difficulty swallowing drinks
- you feel very ill
- you develop new symptoms

Further links

- NHS Direct - 24 hour advice – www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk