

Sore throat

People catch a sore throat (also called “pharyngitis”) 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.

The majority of sore throats are caused by viruses: antibiotics do not treat viruses (they treat bacteria) and so are useless for most people when they have a sore throat.

However, 20 percent of sore throats are caused by a bacteria. This is usually strep throat, and in these cases, antibiotics are usually required. If you are given antibiotics, it is important to complete the entire course (don't stop early).

A physician can determine whether the infection is strep throat by taking a swab of your throat and waiting for the results, which takes 2-3 days.

They may also look for the following symptoms:

1. Fever (≥ 38.0 °C or 100.4 °F)
2. No cough
3. Large/swollen lymph nodes along your neck
4. White pus in the back of your throat

If you do not have any of these symptoms, you likely have a viral infection and do not need antibiotics.



For throat pain, you can take acetaminophen (which is the same thing as Tylenol) or ibuprofen (same as Advil or Motrin). You can also try throat lozenges, and/or gargle warm water with salt in it.



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.



Reasons to return to the ER

- 1. Difficulty swallowing fluids or breathing**
- 2. Persistent fever (≥ 38.0 °C or 100.4 °F) or pain that is not improving despite two days of antibiotics**
- 3. A new red rash**