

# Sore Throat

A sore throat can result from a wide variety of causes and is one of the more common illness complaints in a pediatrician's office.

Viruses are among the most common causes of sore throat. Viruses can cause inflammation and infection of the throat directly, thereby causing discomfort, or they can lead to nasal mucous production and post-nasal drainage which serve to aggravate the throat. Some better-known viruses causing sore throat are influenza (flu) and the virus that causes mononucleosis (mono). Some viruses can also produce blisters in the mouth and throat. Breathing through the mouth, usually as a result of nasal congestion, can produce throat dryness and resulting soreness.

A sore throat can also be caused by bacteria, the most well-known being Streptococcus (which causes Strep throat). Strep throat is treated with antibiotics and is the only cause of sore throat which will be relieved with antibiotic treatment.

In general, treatment of sore throat consists largely of relieving discomfort. Salt water gargles, hard candies, throat sprays (such as Chloraseptic) and lozenges can help provide relief. Lozenges and hard candies are choking hazards in younger children and should be avoided until at least age 4. A humidifier or vaporizer may also help during cold weather and periods of dry air, especially if sore throat is caused by mouth breathing. Such devices should be the cool-mist (non-steam) variety if there are infants/toddlers around so as to prevent accidental burns. Acetaminophen or ibuprofen can be used to alleviate throat discomfort as well.

## When to call:

- If you have been in contact with someone with Strep throat and you also have a sore throat. This increases the chance that you may also have Strep throat.
- If your sore throat is associated with a fever, swollen "glands" (lymph nodes) in the neck, or white patches or coating on the back of your throat and/or tonsils.
- If your sore throat is associated with trouble breathing or difficulty swallowing liquids (not just pain with swallowing).
- If your sore throat persists for more than one week without relief.



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