

- Alternative medicine

## Sore throat: Treatment, causes & diagnosis

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DT Next · 18 Nov 2022 · 4

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Sore throat is a common condition, characterised by painful, dry, or scratchy feeling in the throat. It is more prevalent during the cold months.

Depending on the part of throat getting affected, sore throat can be divided into 3 types: Tonsillitis: It is the redness and swelling of the soft tissue in the back of the mouth, called tonsils. Pharyngitis: Soreness and swelling in the throat is called pharyngitis. Laryngitis: Condition in which there is swelling and redness of the larynx or the voice box.

The most common reason for getting a sore throat is due to cold or flu. Common cold is less harmful and severe than flu. Smoking or chemicals like aerosolized sprays in the form of air fresheners can also cause sore throat. Poor air quality can also irritate the throat.

Sore throats are often part of a cold that comes along with fever, runny nose and cough. It is also a sign of bacterial throat infection such as a strep throat. It may also manifest itself as a symptom of an underlying disease like sinusitis. Several factors like smoking, allergies and overstraining of voice can also lead to a sore throat.

The diagnosis of sore throat is a two-fold process. It includes a physical examination and throat culture. A health care practitioner may use a lighted instrument to examine the throat, ears and nasal passage. The neck region may be gently felt to rule out swollen glands (lymph nodes). A throat culture is usually done if strep throat is suspected. For this, a swab is taken from the back of the throat and the collected sample is tested for strep throat bacteria.

Although it is not always possible to avoid sore throat from developing, it can be prevented following certain measures. Washing of hands regularly with soap and water, avoiding direct contact with people having respiratory distress such as colds and sore throat.

In most cases, a sore throat of viral nature disappears without the need for any treatment or by following a few home remedies. Some of these home remedies include gargling with warm water to which half a teaspoon of salt has been added, drinking warm liquids such as soups and hot tea with honey, sucking on a lozenge and resting your voice until your throat seems better. If the sore throat is caused by a bacterial infection, a full antibiotic course should be taken.