

Helpful information provided by the Department of Emergency Medicine

Pharyngitis (Viral and Bacterial)

Pharyngitis is an *inflammation* (soreness) or infection of the pharynx, or a sore throat.

CAUSES OF PHARYNGITIS

Most sore throats are caused by viruses and are part of a cold. However, some sore throats are caused by the strep *bacteria* (germs) and other bacteria. Sore throats can also be caused by post nasal drip from draining sinuses, allergies, and sometimes even from sleeping with an open mouth. Infectious sore throats can be spread from person to person by coughing, sneezing, and sharing cups or eating utensils.

WHAT IS THE EXPECTED COURSE OF THE ILLNESS?

Sore throats that are *viral* usually last 3-4 days. Viral illness will get better without *antibiotics* (medications which kill germs). Strep throat and other *bacterial* (germ) infections will usually begin to get better about 24-48 hours after you begin to take antibiotics.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- If the caregiver feels there is a bacterial infection or if there is a positive strep test, they will prescribe an antibiotic. **The full course of antibiotics must be taken!!** If the full course of antibiotic is not taken, you or your child may become ill again. If you or your child have strep throat and do not finish the entire course of medication, serious heart or kidney diseases may develop.
- Drink lots of liquids. About 8-10 glasses of liquid each day. (Such as water, juice, fruit drinks, Kool-aid, Gatorade, soda, etc.)
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®) may be taken as directed for relief from pain and discomfort.
- Get lots of rest.
- Gargle with salt water (½ tsp. of salt in a glass of water) as often as every 1-2 hours as you need for comfort.
- If patient is over the age of seven, use hard candy, or sore throat sprays/lozenges.
- Use a decongestant for a stuffy nose.

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF:

- An oral temperature above temp10 develops, or if the fever lasts for more than 2 days.
- Large, tender lumps in the neck develop.
- A rash develops.
- Green, yellow-brown, or bloody sputum is coughed up.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION IF:

- A stiff neck develops.
- You or your child are drooling or unable to swallow liquids.
- You or your child are vomiting, unable to keep medications or liquids down.
- You or your child have severe pain, unrelieved with recommended medications.
- You or your child are having difficulty breathing (not due to stuffy nose).
- You or your child are unable to fully open your mouth.
- You or your child develop redness, swelling, or severe pain anywhere on the neck.

If cultures were done and the rapid screen was negative, we will call if the culture is positive. Call the caregiver if you wish to know the results.