

Throat infections

A throat infection is a sore throat caused by a viral or bacterial infection of the back of your throat and/or the tonsils.



Viral throat infections

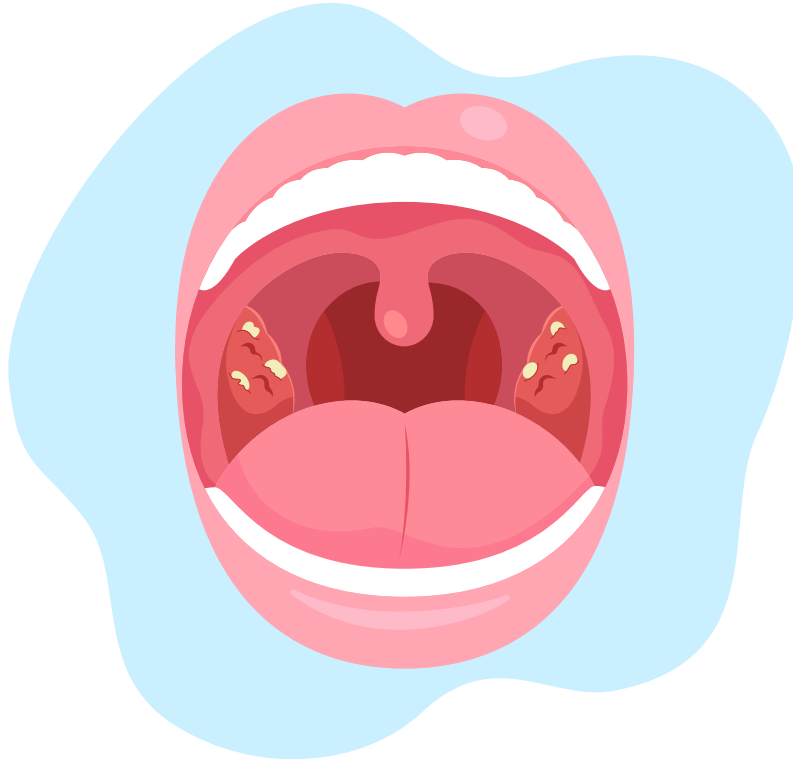
Most throat infections are caused by viruses, the same viruses that cause common colds. If your child is suffering from a viral throat infection, they may experience a runny nose, a cough, and/or a fever, as well as a sore throat. These symptoms usually last less than one week.

Sore throats and fever (greater than 38.5°C) can be treated with acetaminophen (Tempra®, Atasol® or Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®). Remember to give your child fluids to prevent dehydration. Antibiotics are not required in cases of viral throat infections.

Acute tonsillitis

Tonsillitis is a term referring to inflammation of the tonsils. Sometimes a throat infection can be caused by bacteria such as streptococcus. Other names for a bacterial throat infection are *acute tonsillitis*, *pharyngitis*, or *strep throat*.

A common sign of tonsillitis is a lack of cough. The primary symptoms are a very sore throat, pain when swallowing without the symptoms associated with the common cold (runny nose, etc). Your child can also have red tonsils with white spots, tender lymph nodes in the neck, a high fever, a garbled voice, and bad breath. Younger children may also complain of a sore stomach.



What role do tonsils play?

The tonsils are tissues found at the back of your child's throat. They are part of the immune system and play a role in the body's defense against infections.

Treating bacterial tonsillitis

Your child's physician may do a rapid strep screen and/or throat culture. If the test result is positive, your doctor will prescribe a 10-day course of antibiotics. It is important that your child finish all the antibiotics even if they feel better after a couple of days. Your child will no longer be contagious after 24 hours of antibiotic treatment.

The main reason for treating a strep throat with antibiotics is to prevent rare complications, such as abscesses (collection of pus) or rheumatic fever (inflammation that can damage many parts of the body). If your child's symptoms get worse, contact your doctor or seek help at an emergency room.

If your child has a complication, an otolaryngologist (ear, nose and throat specialist) may be consulted.

