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Sore Throat

WHAT CAUSES SORE A SORE THROAT?

Pharyngitis can be caused by many things. Sometimes when mucus from your sinuses drains into your throat, the drainage can make your throat feel sore, especially in the mornings. 90% of sore throats in adults are caused by viruses. Bacteria (such as strep) can cause a sore throat. Your throat may also feel sore if you smoke, breathe polluted air or drink alcoholic beverages. If you have hay fever or other allergies, a sore throat may be one of the symptoms. Most other sore throats are caused by viruses, which usually do not lead to serious problems.

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT IS CAUSING MY SORE THROAT?

Many of the illnesses that cause sore throats have similar symptoms. If you have a sore throat, you can treat the pain with acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil) or naproxen (Aleve). If the soreness in your throat does not go away after 2 days, call the Health Center. You may need to have tests run to determine the cause of your sore throat.

WHAT IS STREP THROAT?

Strep throat is caused by a type of bacteria called Streptococcus. The pain of strep throat often feels much like sore throats caused by other illnesses. What's important and different about strep throat is that serious complications may occur if it is not treated with antibiotics.

WHAT TESTS ARE USED TO FIND THE CAUSE OF MY SORE THROAT?

If you have signs of strep throat, such as fever, enlarged lymph nodes or white patches in your throat, your doctor will order a strep test. He or she may do a rapid strep test, a throat culture, or both. If your doctor thinks you have a viral infection such as infectious mononucleosis (mono), he or she will probably do a blood test.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR A SORE THROAT CAUSED BY BACTERIA?

If your sore throat is caused by strep, your doctor will order an antibiotic injection or an oral antibiotic to take for 10 days. It is very important to take all the oral antibiotic, even if you start feeling better after a few days. If a strep throat is present, others with sore throats who live with or have been close to the patient should be tested and/or treated. The antibiotic will prevent Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease.

WHAT ABOUT A SORE THROAT THAT'S CAUSED BY ALLERGIES?

If a sore throat is a symptom of hay fever or another allergy, your doctor can help determine the causes of your allergies, or you may need to take medicine for your allergies.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR A SORE THROAT CAUSED BY VIRUSES?

Antibiotics don't work against viruses. *Antibiotics given inappropriately for viral illnesses contribute to the emergence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.* Infections caused by viruses usually just run their course. If you have a cold, your symptoms will usually go away within a week or 10 days. Symptoms caused by mono can last

longer, sometimes for 4 weeks or longer. You can help yourself feel better with the tips listed below.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP THE THROAT PAIN?

Take acetaminophen, ibuprofen or naproxen.

Gargle with warm salt water (1 teaspoon of salt per glass of water).

Use throat lozenges or hard candy.

Use throat sprays (like Chloraseptic).

Use flavored frozen desserts, such as Popsicles.

Use a humidifier.

Do not smoke cigarettes.

Drink warm liquids (like tea with lemon and honey).

A pain medicine may be prescribed.

FOR WHAT REASONS SHOULD I CALL THE DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY?

If you are not better in (1) one week.

If you are having trouble swallowing.

You have fever greater than 100.8 degrees.