

This fact sheet helps you to know what's 'normal' and what you can expect to happen if you or your child develops a sore throat. It also tells you when you should become concerned and seek medical advice from a health professional.

Could it be Coronavirus?

A new, continuous cough could be coronavirus (Covid-19)

Main symptoms

Most people with coronavirus have at least 1 of these symptoms.

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature).
- **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual).
- **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

What to do if you have symptoms

If you have any of the main symptoms of coronavirus:

1. **Get a test to check** if you have coronavirus as soon as possible.
2. **Stay at home** and do not have visitors until you get your test result – only leave your home to have a test.

3. Visit NHS .UK:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>
Here you will find the latest advice on symptoms, how to book a test and advice on when and how long you, your household and your 'bubble' need to isolate.

What to do if your child has symptoms of Covid

If you think your child may have Covid, you're worried about your child or not sure what to do.

For children aged 5 or over – use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service.

For children under 5 – call 111.

Useful facts

How common is sore throat? Around half of the population will have at least one sore throat a year. A fifth of these will go to see their GP.

What causes a sore throat? A sore throat is usually caused by an infection with germs called viruses or bacteria and will generally get better by itself. If you suffer from bacterial tonsillitis you may see whitish pus on your tonsils (the two clumps of tissue on either side of your throat), have painful glands in your neck and a fever – but no cough. The Epstein-Barr virus, which causes glandular fever, is responsible for up to one in ten cases.

What can I expect to happen?

How long are my symptoms likely to last? Four out of five sore throats will get better within 7 days (and a maximum of 2 weeks) without the need for treatment by a health professional.

Will I need antibiotics? You won't normally need antibiotics (which can often do more harm than good if given unnecessarily) for most throat infections.

What will I be asked? If you do see a doctor or nurse, they may ask you some questions and examine your throat to decide if you are one of the small number of people who require antibiotics.

Will I need any tests? You are unlikely to need any tests, but occasionally a throat swab is taken, or a blood test for glandular fever. If you suspect that you have coronavirus symptoms you should arrange to have a test - see the section above.

What can I do myself to get better – now and in the future?

Home remedies You can relieve symptoms of sore throat by eating cool, soft food and drinking cool or warm drinks and sucking ice lollies. Adults can try sucking lozenges, ice cubes, or hard sweets and gargling with warm, salty water which may also help reduce swelling and pain.

Smoking Avoid smoking and smoky environments as much as you can.

Fluids Adults should drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of fluid (preferably water) every day, particularly if you also have a fever. Offer your child regular fluids. If you're a breastfeeding mother, offer your child as many feeds as she/he will take.

Pain killers Painkillers such as Paracetamol and ibuprofen can help to relieve symptoms of sore throat, fever, and headaches in adults. Use what suits you best and talk to your pharmacist if you're unsure. Do not give paracetamol to a child under 2 months. Do not give ibuprofen to a child under 3 months or under 5kg or to children with asthma.

Never give Aspirin to under 16s.

Schooling/nursery Children can go to school or nursery with a sore throat but should stay at home until any fever goes away.

Gargles, lozenges and sprays You may find some of these over the counter preparations helpful.

When to seek medical help

Seek medical advice if your symptoms are no better after two weeks or if you have frequent sore throats that do not respond to pain killers.

Warning symptoms and signs

Contact your GP or NHS111 if you have any of the following:

High fever With any temperature over 37.8°C, consider whether you or your child has Covid -19 (see coronavirus section above) and follow our earlier advice. If you then have a persistent high temperature of over 38°C for more than three days that does not come down even if you take ibuprofen and/or paracetamol, you should contact your GP or call 111.

For children under 5 with a raised temperature see our factsheet 'Fever in Children'.

Glandular fever A sore throat that doesn't get better within 10 to 14 days or that gets worse rather than better may suggest glandular fever.

Severity Your pain is severe and does not respond to over the counter pain killers.

Voice changes Your voice becomes muffled.

Fluid intake You find it difficult to drink enough fluids and become dehydrated

Effect on day to day life Your symptoms are so bad that they severely affect your quality of life and prevent you from functioning normally.

HIV/AIDS or other causes of reduced immunity If you suffer from a sore throat and have a deficient immune system because, for example, you have HIV/AIDS, or you take certain medication (such as chemotherapy, high dose steroids, disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs, or a drug called carbimazole), you should seek medical advice if you develop a sore throat.

Call 999 or go to A & E if you or your child has any of these:

Breathing You find it hard to breathe in, and your throat feels like it's closing up or your breathing sounds high pitched sound (stridor) when you breathe

Drooling and swallowing You're drooling and find it difficult to swallow even small quantities of water – this is an emergency!

Severity Your symptoms are severe and getting worse quickly

Where can I find out more?

Visit NHS website <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sore-throat> for further information and advice.