

Kids and Sore Throat

Two kinds of germs cause infections: viruses and bacteria. **Most** sore throats are caused by viruses. If your child has a **viral** sore throat, antibiotics will not work.

Signs of viral sore throat may include:

- runny nose, head cold and cough
- hoarse voice

Less often, a sore throat can be due to a bacterial infection called **strep throat**. Antibiotics do help strep throat and can prevent complications.

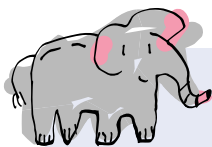
Children with strep throat do **not** usually have cold symptoms like a runny nose and cough.

Call your doctor if your child has these signs of strep throat:

- bright red tonsils
- pus or white spots on the tonsils
- fever
- swollen glands in the neck

What your doctor will do:

- If your child has a bacterial strep throat, your doctor will prescribe an antibiotic to treat it and prevent more serious problems.
- If it's a viral sore throat, your doctor will **not** prescribe an antibiotic. Antibiotics do not work against viruses.



None of the signs listed above definitely indicates strep throat. Your doctor must do a throat swab and a lab test to diagnose a strep throat. Only strep throat should be treated with an antibiotic.

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If your doctor prescribes an antibiotic:

- Make sure your child takes all the medicine as directed, even after he or she feels better.
- Stop the medicine **right away** and call your doctor if your child gets a rash while taking the antibiotic. Your child may be allergic to the medicine.
- Never give your child leftover antibiotics.

What you can do to help your child feel better:

- Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and fluids to drink. Avoid acidic fluids like orange juice. They can irritate the throat.
- You can use acetaminophen (like Tylenol) or ibuprofen (like Advil or Motrin) for a fever or pain as directed by your doctor or nurse.
- Have older children gargle with warm salt water (one tsp. of salt in a glass of warm water).
- Keep your child away from cigarette smoke.
- Let your child eat ice chips, ice cream or popsicles. This may make his or her throat feel better.

Call your doctor right away if your child develops any of these signs:

- trouble breathing
- throat pain that keeps getting worse
- red or sore joints
- rash
- neck pain or stiffness
- ear pain



Remember!
Always use
antibiotics wisely.

For more information about the REACH Mass Project, call toll-free 1-866-281-8906. Or, visit the Web site at www.reachmass.org.

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