



Sore throat

If you have questions or concerns, call Texas Children's Health Plan's 24-hour Nurse Help Line at 1-800-686-3831.

There are registered nurses available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help you with your child's health care needs.

What is a sore throat?

- Pain and discomfort in the throat, especially when swallowing.
- Many things can cause a sore throat. Colds and viruses are common causes of sore throat that do not need to be treated with antibiotics. Sometimes a bacterial infection (strep throat) can cause a sore throat and fever. A strep throat does need to be treated with an antibiotic.

What to do at home

- Over-the-counter pain relief medicine may help your child to feel better. These medicines are acetaminophen (*Tylenol*, *FeverAll*, others) and ibuprofen (*Motrin*, *Advil*).

Warning: Read labels. Giving too much medicine can be dangerous.

Warning: Do not give an infant or child aspirin because it can cause a rare but very serious illness called Reyes syndrome.

- For the child old enough to gargle, a salt water gargle may help. You can make this by mixing 1/2 teaspoon of salt in 1 cup (8 ounces) of warm water. Have your child sip just enough of the salt water to fill his or her mouth, then gargle with it. Make sure that your child does not swallow the salt water. He or she should spit it out when done.
- Sucking on a hard candy or throat lozenge may help the throat to feel better.

WARNING: Do not give a hard candy or lozenge to a child younger than 4 years old. They might choke on it.

- Sipping on warm or hot tea with honey and lemon may help the throat feel better.

WARNING: Do not give honey to an infant under 1 year old.

- Eating ice cream, popsicles or *Jell-o* may help the throat feel better.
- Do not smoke or let your child breathe other people's smoke. Smoke can irritate the throat and put your child at risk for infection. Keep your home and car smoke free. If you or a close family member or friend is a smoker, get help. Free help is available. Call 1-800-784-4669.

When is a sore throat okay to treat at home

- If there is no fever.
- If there are other signs of a cold or flu like a runny nose.
- If the child does not look sick.

When to call your medical home doctor or nurse

- Your child has temperature of 101°F or more and is complaining of a sore throat.
- Your child has a sore throat but no other signs of a cold or flu (no runny nose, no cough).
- Your child has a sore throat and a close family member or friend was recently diagnosed with a strep throat.
- Your child has a rash along with a sore throat.
- Your child is complaining of a very painful sore throat.
- Your child's fever lasts more than 3 days.
- Your child's sore throat lasts more than 2 days.
- Your child is less than 1 year old.
- Your child has headache, belly pain, or vomiting.
- Child is not eating or taking fluids well.

When emergency medical care is needed

- Your child has difficulty breathing or swallowing.
- Your child's voice sounds soft or quiet.
- Your child has a stiff neck or difficulty opening the mouth.
- Your child is drooling because he or she cannot swallow his or her own saliva.

