Sore Throat

A sore throat is an inflamed or irritated throat that causes pain or discomfort when a person swallows. Other signs may include a fever, white patches in the throat and swollen lymph glands in the neck.

Causes

A sore throat may be caused by:

- An infection
- An allergy
- Low humidity
- Smoking
- Shouting or voice strain
- Breathing in chemical fumes or air pollution

Things you can do to feel better

- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink plenty of liquids. Drink hot liquids, such as tea and soup, to soothe the throat and thin mucus.
- Gargle with warm salt water. Mix ½ teaspoon of salt in 1 cup or 240 milliliters (ml) of warm water.
- Suck on sore throat lozenges or hard candies.
- Use over the counter pain medicine. Children should not take aspirin.
- Stop smoking and avoid second-hand smoke.

In most cases, a sore throat will heal on its own. **See your doctor if you have a fever, a rash or your signs worsen.** A swab of the back of the throat may be done to see if you have an infection.

- If you have a **bacterial** infection, such as strep throat, antibiotic medicine may be ordered by your doctor. Take all of the medicine until it is gone. Do not stop taking it when you feel better.
- **Viral** infections, such as a cold or flu (influenza), cannot be treated with antibiotics.

Call your doctor right away if you have:

- Trouble breathing
- Severe problems swallowing
- A fever over 100.5 degrees F or 38 degrees C
- A rash
- Tender or swollen lymph glands in the neck

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.