Sore Throats
You Leave Me Speechless

Sore throats can be one of the most annoying and uncomfortable ailments you can have. It's difficult to speak, swallow, or get a good night's sleep. The good news is, sore throats are usually the result of a minor illness, and with proper care and attention, can often be treated quickly and effectively at home.

Types Of Sore Throat
In this section we'll discuss two of the most typical kinds of sore throat—the common, mild sore throat often associated with other illnesses or environmental factors, and strep throat, which is caused by a more serious bacterial infection.

Common Sore Throat. Most often you'll find that the common sore throat accompanies the cold or flu. Postnasal drip (nasal drainage down the back of the throat) is usually the culprit. The common sore throat can also be caused by smoking, air pollution, low humidity, yelling, or breathing through the mouth for long periods of time.

Strep Throat. Strep throat is caused by a streptococcal (strep) bacterial infection in the back of the throat. Strep throat accounts for about 10 percent of sore throats in adults and between 15 and 30 percent of sore throats in children. Strep throat hits quickly and painfully, causing a sudden and severe sore throat. Strep throat is highly contagious, and is most often passed to others when an infected person expels strep bacteria by coughing or sneezing.

Signs & Symptoms To Look Out For
Common Sore Throat Or Strep?
Now that we know more about common sore throats and strep bacterial infections, it's important to be able to distinguish which type of sore throat you are experiencing. Check out the symptoms for both the common sore throat and strep bacterial infection listed below. In most cases, both conditions, when recognized early, can be treated at home without a trip to your healthcare provider.

Symptoms Of A Common Sore Throat
+ A dry, scratchy throat
+ Pain or irritation in the throat, especially when swallowing or speaking
+ Coughing and sneezing
+ Occasional, mild fever
+ Runny nose and/or postnasal drip
+ Inflamed or swollen neck glands
+ Back of the throat and/or tonsils are red or have white spots

Symptoms Of Strep Throat
+ A sudden, severe sore throat
+ Difficulty swallowing
+ Yellow or white spots in the back of the throat
+ Swollen lymph nodes and tonsils
+ A fever of 101°F or higher
+ A relative absence of coughing, sneezing, and stuffy nose (these symptoms are most commonly associated with a common sore throat or cold, not strep throat)

When To Seek Care For A Sore Throat
If you are experiencing persistent and severe symptoms, they could be the sign of a much more serious condition. The following symptoms mean you may need to seek professional medical help for your sore throat.
+ Seek medical help if you are drooling or having difficulty breathing or swallowing.
Sore Throats (continued)

+ If you have a stiff neck, and severe headache.
+ If you have a fever of more than 101°F (103°F for children) or a fever that lasts for more than two days.
+ If you experience a sore throat (or mouth ulcers) lasting two weeks or more.

**Key Point:** In some cases, strep throat can trigger rheumatic fever, a condition that affects the heart and joints. Symptoms include weakness, joint pain, and jerking movements in the arms and legs, among others. See a healthcare professional if you experience these symptoms.

**Treating A Sore Throat At Home**

As mentioned before, in the majority of cases, common sore throat and strep throat can be treated at home. Use the tips mentioned here to treat yourself for sore throat or strep throat and feel better fast.

**Common Sore Throat**

+ Drink eight, 8 oz. glasses of fluids daily to help soothe your throat.
+ Gargle every hour with warm salt water to reduce discomfort and swelling. To make a salt solution, stir 1/2 teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water and gargle for 30-60 seconds.
+ Try over-the-counter throat lozenges and cough drops to soothe a sore throat.
+ Use a decongestant to help relieve post-nasal drip.
+ Rest your voice.
+ Take over-the-counter pain relievers (like ibuprofen or acetaminophen).
+ Use a humidifier to keep nasal passages moist and more resistant to viruses.

**Strep Throat**

+ Treatment for strep throat is very similar to the treatment of a common sore throat. With this in mind, try the following tips.
+ Eat and drink cold foods and liquids to soothe your throat.
+ Drink extra fluids in addition to the usual eight, 8 oz. glasses—fluids help flush the system and speed healing.
+ Get plenty of rest (at least eight to 10 hours nightly).

**Preventing Sore Throats**

There is very little we can do to prevent a sore throat or strep throat altogether. There are, however, a number of powerful steps we can take to lessen the chances of developing one of these conditions. Practicing the following steps can help you avoid the pain and discomfort associated with a sore or strep throat.

+ Avoid contact with anyone you know who has strep throat.
+ Wash your hands and face often (hands should be lathered well with antibacterial soap and warm water).
+ Don’t share eating and drinking utensils.
+ Humidify your home (humidity keeps mucus membranes more resistant to bacteria).
+ Drink at least eight, 8 oz. glasses of fluids daily.
+ Identify and avoid irritants such as smoke or yelling that cause sore throats.