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SORE THROAT

What causes a sore throat (pharyngitis)?

Most sore throats are caused by viruses and are part of a cold. Some are due to the strep bacteria. A rapid strep test or a throat culture is the only way to distinguish between strep pharyngitis and viral pharyngitis. Tonsillitis, a temporary swelling and redness of the tonsils, often with pus, is usually present with any throat infection. Strep throat requires antibiotic treatment, but viruses cannot be treated with an antibiotic.

Since the rapid strep test was negative on your child, a throat culture will be done. Occasionally, the culture becomes positive even though the rapid strep test was negative. You will be contacted by our office if the throat culture comes back positive, and a prescription for an antibiotic will be called in to your pharmacy.

What can be done for a sore throat?

Expected course: Sore throats with viral illnesses usually last 3 to 5 days. Keep your child home until he has no fever for 24 hours.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Advil / Motrin) can be given for a few days for a temperature over 100.4 or for throat pains.

Children over 8 can gargle with warm salt water (1/4 teaspoon of salt per glass)

Children over 4 can suck on hard candy as a soothing measure

Your child may have difficulty eating because of pain and may prefer a soft diet (yogurt, eggs, oatmeal, mashed potatoes, pudding)

Make sure your child is drinking liquids well, such as water, Gatorade, popsicles, or tea. Avoid very acidic beverages such as soda, orange juice, or lemonade.

Do not use any antibiotics you may have left over from a prior illness.

Call our office if:

Fever lasts more than 5 days.

Your child has any difficulty breathing.

Your child vomits frequently or for over 24 hours.

You are concerned that your child is getting dehydrated (dry lips and mouth, no tears when crying, no urine in over 8 hours).

Your child begins drooling, has much worse pains on one side of the throat than the other, cannot open his mouth wide, or develops a muffled sounding voice.

Your child develops any new rash.

For any urgent or emergent medical concerns, please call 911 or go immediately to the nearest emergency department.