



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

Inflammation or infection of the pharynx. The pharynx is the hollow passage at the back of the throat. It is made up of the nasopharynx, which leads to the nose and oropharynx which leads to the mouth. The larynx (voice box) is located below the pharynx. Pharyngitis occurs in all age groups, but most often affects children.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Sore throat.
- Swallowing difficulty.
- Tickle or "lump" in the throat.
- Fever.
- Swollen glands in the neck (sometimes).
- Throat may be red or covered with a white or grayish membrane (sometimes).
- Body aches (sometimes).

### CAUSES

Viral infection (most common cause) or bacterial infection (such as streptococcus). The germs are spread by person-to-person contact. Rarely, there may be other causes, such as irritation.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Common cold, flu, or seasonal allergies.
- Weak immune system due to illness or drugs.
- Smoking or second-hand smoke.
- Chronic illness, such as diabetes.
- Close quarters, such as with military recruits, in schools, and daycare centers.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Avoid close contact with anyone with a sore throat.
- Avoid germs. Wash hands often, especially children.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Most cases of viral infection clear up on their own in a week. Antibiotic drugs can successfully treat bacterial infections. Complications are rare.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Airways may become blocked.
- Abscess (pus-filled area of infection).
- Rheumatic fever, scarlet fever, or glomerulonephritis, if pharyngitis is caused by streptococcal bacteria and does not receive adequate antibiotic treatment.



## DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do an exam of the throat, ears, nose, neck, and lungs. Medical tests may include blood study and throat culture (from a swab of the throat), or rapid strep test find the type of infection.
- Treatment will include self-care measures and antibiotic drugs for bacterial infections. Antibiotics will not help viral infections.
- To relieve the sore throat, gargle frequently with warm or cold double-strength tea or warm salt water (mix one-half teaspoon of salt in one cup of water).
- Wash hands often to help prevent the spread of germs to other family members. Avoid kissing or sharing cups or other utensils.

### MEDICATIONS

- For minor discomfort, you may use nonprescription drugs such as ibuprofen. Don't give aspirin to a child.
- Nonprescription throat lozenges (for patients over age 3) may help ease discomfort.
- Antibiotic drugs are usually prescribed for bacterial infection. Finish entire course of drugs even if symptoms improve.

### ACTIVITY

Return to normal activities as symptoms improve. A person can no longer spread the germs if they have taken the antibiotic drug for at least 24 hours.

### DIET

Drink plenty of fluids. If swallowing solid food is painful, try a liquid or soft diet for a few days.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of pharyngitis.
- The following occur during treatment:
  - Breathing/swallowing difficulty or chest pain.
  - Fever worsens or severe headache develops.
  - Thick mucus drainage from the nose.
  - Cough that produces colored or bloody sputum.
  - Skin rash.
  - Dark urine.

Special notes:

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More notes on the back of this page