

TONSILLITIS



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Tonsils that are inflamed (red, sore, and swollen). The tonsils are located at the back of the throat on each side. They are small at birth, enlarge during childhood, and become smaller during the teen years. Tonsils usually help prevent infections in the nose, mouth, and throat from spreading to other places in the body. However, they themselves can become infected. Tonsillitis can be spread from person to person. It affects all ages, but is most common in children between ages 5 and 10.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Sore throat and pain when you swallow.
- Tonsils are redder than normal.
- Throat may have white or yellow patches.
- Swollen glands on either side of the jaw.
- Fever.
- Headache.
- Ear pain.
- A very young child may not want to eat.

CAUSES

Usually a bacterial (often *streptococcus*, or "strep" as it is called) or a virus infection.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Young children.
- Daycare centers (for both children and teachers).
- Living, working, or being in crowded places.
- Smoking.
- Having a chronic illness, such as diabetes.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Fight germs. Wash hands often.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Symptoms generally begin to improve in 2 to 3 days. Treatment will take longer to ensure that germs are gone. If tonsillitis is severe and occurs often, your health care provider may suggest surgery (tonsillectomy) to remove the tonsils.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Abscess (an infected sore on the tonsils).
- Chronic tonsillitis. It can cause ear infection and enlarged tonsils. This may lead to breathing problems and snoring.
- Rheumatic fever may occur if the cause is strep and it is not treated, or if treatment is stopped too soon.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will examine your head, neck, and throat. Medical tests may include a rapid strep test and a throat culture (to find which germ is the cause). Family members may also need a strep test. A person may carry the strep germ, but not have any symptoms.
- Treatment usually involves drugs and self-care.
- 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).
- Suck on hard candy such as lemon drops, to increase moisture in the mouth.
- If surgery to remove the tonsils is needed, your health care provider will discuss the details. It is usually done on an outpatient basis.

MEDICATIONS

- If the cause is strep, take prescribed antibiotic (usually penicillin) for at least 10 days, or as directed.
- To relieve pain, you may use acetaminophen. Don't give aspirin to children under age 18.

ACTIVITY

- Stay away from others until fever, pain, and other symptoms disappear.
- Bed rest if there is fever. Then return to your regular routine.

DIET

Drink plenty of fluids. While the throat is very sore, use liquids for food. This includes milk shakes, soups, and high-protein fluids (diet or instant-breakfast milk drinks).



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of tonsillitis. If there is any trouble with breathing, call right away.
- Symptoms worsen, or other symptoms occur during treatment.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page