# Pharyngitis – Patient Guide

**What is pharyngitis?**

* Pharyngitis, or a sore throat, is commonly caused by viruses and, less frequently, bacteria.
* Based on your clinical presentation, your healthcare provider decided if antibiotics may help you get better quicker.

**What should I do to feel better?**

* Acetaminophen (commonly called Tylenol®) can help with pain and fever and ibuprofen (commonly called Advil® or Motrin®) can help reduce pain and inflammation; store brands (e.g., CVS brand) are just as good as name brands (e.g., Tylenol®).
* Try warm tea with or without honey, warm soup, or throat sprays with benzocaine, cold or frozen desserts, or sucking on ice.
* For children over 5 years of age and adults, lozenges with menthol or benzocaine or hard candy may reduce throat pain.
* Consider gargling saltwater (which can be made by dissolving about ½ a teaspoon of salt in warm water).
* Hydration and rest always help.
* Avoid honey in children under 1 year of age because of the increased risk of botulism and to avoid any cough and cold medications in children under 6 years of age as these have been associated with overdoses.
* Herbal remedies, homeopathic therapies, and dietary supplements have not been shown to be effective.

**When should I contact my healthcare provider?**

* Fever and sore throat typically improve within 3 days; however, mononucleosis (mono) may take one month to resolve and fatigue may take several months to resolve. If diagnosed with mono, avoid contact sports for at least 3-6 weeks.
* If your healthcare provider was concerned about certain causes of bacterial pharyngitis, antibiotics may have been prescribed. Antibiotic treatment can potentially reduce symptoms of bacterial pharyngitis by about a day and other complications.
* If you have continued fevers after 3 days or worsening throat pain, you should seek an in-person visit.
* If you develop difficulty breathing or swallowing, confusion, or a bulging neck mass develops, you should go directly to an emergency department.

*This document is intended to provide health-related information so that you may be better informed. It is not a substitute for your healthcare provider's medical advice and should not be relied upon for treatment for specific medical conditions.*

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