**What causes a sore throat?**

Common viral and bacterial infections that may cause a sore throat include:

**Viral**
- Flu/Cold
- Mononucleosis

**Bacterial**
- Strep throat
- Other bacteria

Additional causes may include allergies and environmental irritants. Gastrointestinal reflux and tumors can also cause a sore throat, but are not as common.

**What are helpful remedies for a sore throat?**

Sore throats caused by viral infections usually subside in 7-10 days. However, recovery may take weeks to months when suffering from certain viral infections such as mononucleosis. Remedies that may alleviate pain and minimize discomfort include:

- Drink warm liquids (honey or lemon tea is a favorite home remedy)
- Gargle with a warm salt water mix 6 or more times a day (mix 1/2 - 1 tsp of salt in an 8 oz glass of warm water)
- Drink cold liquids or suck on ice
- Suck on throat lozenges
- Use a cool-mist vaporizer or humidifier
- Take over-the-counter pain medications, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil)

Note: Children should not be given aspirin due to the risk of Reye’s syndrome.*

**What are the signs and symptoms of Strep?**

**Helpful remedies**

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**Warning**

Although many sore throats can be treated with home remedies, a health care provider should be contacted if symptoms last longer than 7-10 days or if any of the following symptoms occur.

- Severe difficulty swallowing or breathing
- Excessive drooling in a young child
- A fever, especially 101°F or greater
- Tender or swollen lymph glands in the neck
- Pus or white patches in the back of the throat
- A red rash on the body that feels rough
- Increased redness in the skin folds

*Reye’s Syndrome*

This syndrome, most common in children 4-12 years of age, is associated with the use of aspirin to treat chickenpox and/or the flu. Brain damage and liver damage of an unknown cause are a result of this syndrome.
What is strep throat?
Strep throat is a bacterial infection of the throat caused by a particular strain of streptococcus bacteria.

How is strep throat diagnosed?
Strep throat is not easily detected by a physical examination, therefore a throat culture or rapid strep test may be ordered. Results from these tests may be used to make or confirm a diagnosis.

How is strep throat treated?
Strep throat is treated with antibiotics (e.g., penicillin)

Complications associated with strep throat may include:
- Ear infections
- Sinusitis
- Infected lymph nodes in the neck
- Abscess behind the throat or tonsils

If strep goes untreated, the following problems may result:

- Rheumatic fever
  - A disease which may affect the heart, nervous system, skin, and/or joints
- Acute Glomerulonephritis
  - An inflammatory attack on the kidneys
- Scarlet fever
  - An infection of the throat with a bright red rash covering most of the body
- Pneumonia
  - An infection that inflames one or both lungs, which may fill with fluid

Can strep throat be prevented?
Ways strep throat can be prevented include:

- Practice good hygiene (wash hands frequently)
- Reduce or limit contact with those who are ill
- Avoid close physical contact with an infected person
- Avoid sharing cups, plates, utensils, and napkins with an infected person
- Avoid using shared objects (e.g., telephone) until they are disinfected

References
- www.nlm.nih.gov (Medline Plus)
- www.mayoclinic.com (Mayo Clinic)