

# Sore throat - Advice Sheet



## Advice for parents and carers

Sore throat is extremely common in children, teenagers and young adults and is often associated with a high temperature. Tonsils are the small glands that sit either side of the throat and are sometimes affected (tonsillitis).

## When should you worry?



RED

If your child has any of the following:

- Is going blue around the lips
- Becomes pale, mottled and feels abnormally cold to touch
- Has a fit / seizure
- Becomes extremely agitated (crying inconsolably despite distraction), confused or very lethargic (difficult to wake)
- Develops a rash that does not disappear with pressure (the 'Glass Test')
- Is under 3 months of age with a temperature of 38°C / 100.4°F or above (unless fever in the 48 hours following vaccinations and no other red or amber features)

**You need urgent help.**

Go to the nearest Hospital Emergency (A&E) Department or phone 999



AMBER

If your child has any of the following:

- Is unable to swallow their own saliva
- Is having difficulty opening their mouth
- Is having breathing problems, such as rapid breathing, shortness of breath or laboured breathing (drawing in of muscles below the lower ribs when they breath in)
- Seems dehydrated (sunken eyes, drowsy or no urine passed for 12 hours)
- Is becoming drowsy (excessively sleepy) or irritable (unable to settle them with toys, TV, food or picking up) - especially if they remain drowsy or irritable despite their fever coming down
- Has extreme shivering or complains of muscle pain
- Continues to have a fever of 38.0°C or above for more than 5 days
- Is getting worse or if you are worried

**You need to contact a doctor or nurse today.**

Please ring your GP surgery or contact NHS 111 - dial 111 or for children aged 5 years and above visit [111.nhs.uk](http://111.nhs.uk)



GREEN

- If none of the above features are present

### Self Care

Continue providing your child's care at home.

If you are still concerned about your child, contact NHS 111 – dial 111 or for children aged 5 years and above visit [111.nhs.uk](http://111.nhs.uk)

## Symptoms of tonsillitis

- Sore throat and pain on swallowing
- Fever can be present
- Swollen, painful glands in your neck
- Tonsils red with pus

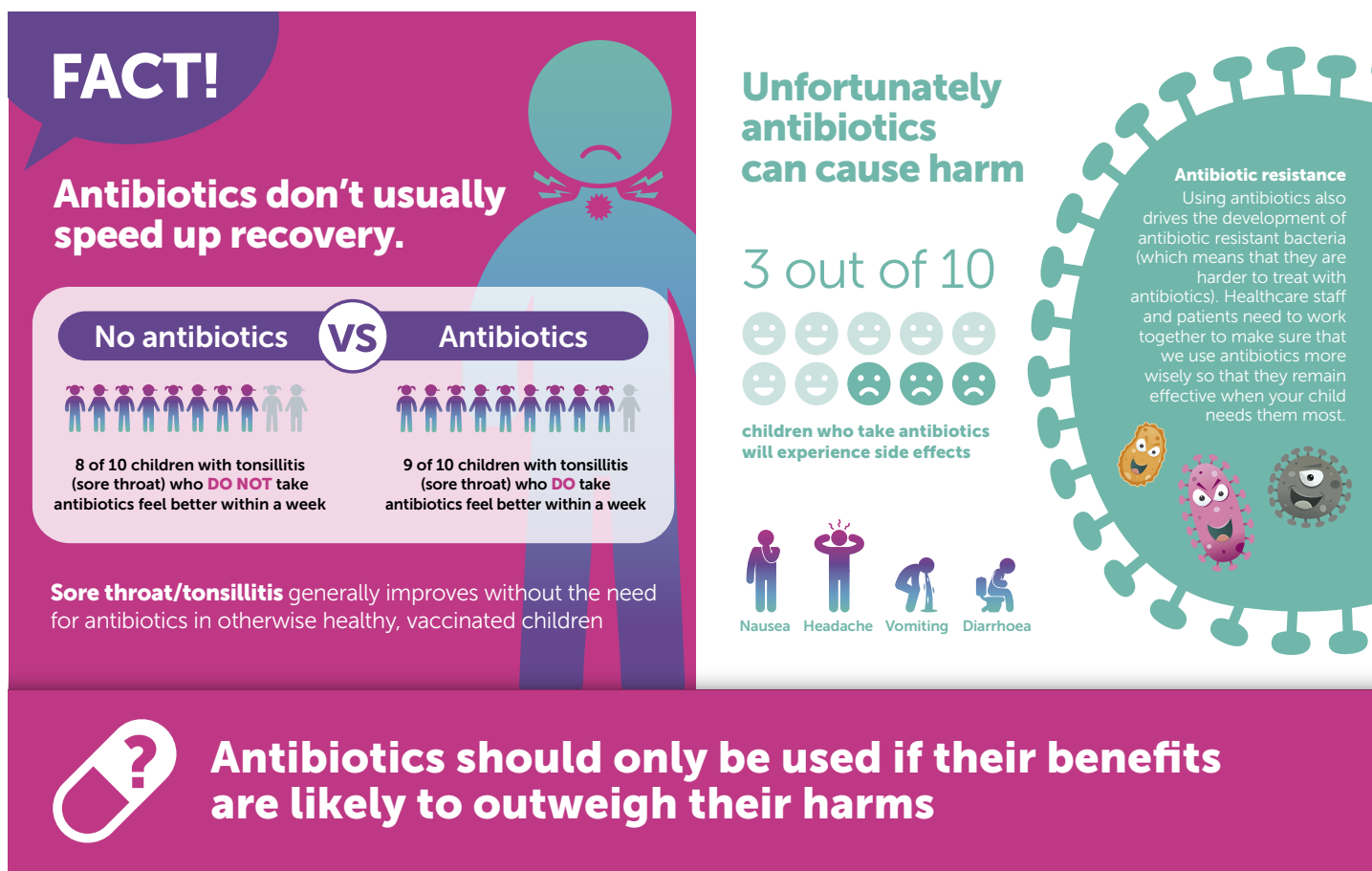
These symptoms usually improve within 4-7 days.

## Causes

Most cases of sore throat in young children (under 5 years of age) are caused by viral infections; your child may also have a runny nose, cough or earache. Tonsillitis can be caused by a number of different bacteria, but it is usually due to group A streptococcus bacteria (strep throat).



## Treatment

Most children with tonsillitis/sore throat do not require treatment with antibiotics. Antibiotics rarely speed up recovery and often cause side effects such as rash and diarrhoea. They will also promote the development of antibiotic resistant bacteria in your child.



**FACT!**

**Antibiotics don't usually speed up recovery.**

No antibiotics	VS	Antibiotics
 8 of 10 children with tonsillitis (sore throat) who <b>DO NOT</b> take antibiotics feel better within a week		 9 of 10 children with tonsillitis (sore throat) who <b>DO</b> take antibiotics feel better within a week

**Sore throat/tonsillitis** generally improves without the need for antibiotics in otherwise healthy, vaccinated children

**Unfortunately antibiotics can cause harm**

3 out of 10 children who take antibiotics will experience side effects

**Antibiotic resistance**  
Using antibiotics also drives the development of antibiotic resistant bacteria (which means that they are harder to treat with antibiotics). Healthcare staff and patients need to work together to make sure that we use antibiotics more wisely so that they remain effective when your child needs them most.

**Side effects:** Nausea, Headache, Vomiting, Diarrhoea

**Antibiotics should only be used if their benefits are likely to outweigh their harms**

## Treatment continued

Most children with tonsillitis/sore throat do not require treatment with antibiotics. Antibiotics rarely speed up recovery and often cause side effects such as rash and diarrhoea. They will also promote the development of antibiotic resistant bacteria in your child.

You can help relieve symptoms by;

- Giving your child paracetamol or ibuprofen to help relieve pain
- Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids
- You can buy a throat spray from your pharmacist which may help with pain

## Prevention

It is not always easy to avoid catching these infections. However, good hygiene practices can prevent infections spreading.

- Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly
- Use a tissue when coughing or sneezing and put it in the bin
- Avoid sharing glasses or utensils with people who are unwell