

Tonsil Infection - Viral

Definition

- A viral infection of the tonsils
- Also called viral tonsillitis

Health Information

Symptoms

- The tonsils are lymph glands in the back of the throat. They stand guard on each side of the throat. Usually they are the size of a small cherry.
- Any infection of the throat usually also involves the tonsils. Red and swollen tonsils don't have any special meaning.
- Pain, discomfort or raw feeling of the throat
- Pain is made worse when swallows
- Children less than 2 years of age usually can't complain about a sore throat. A young child who does not want favorite foods may have a sore throat. They may also start to cry during feedings.
- If you look at the throat with a light, it will be bright red. The tonsil will be red and swollen.

Tonsil Size

- Grade 1 - Can barely see the tonsil
- Grade 2 - Small tonsil
- Grade 3 - Tonsil half way to the midline
- Grade 4 - Tonsils are touching (called kissing tonsils)

Cause

- Usually caused by an infection of the throat (pharyngitis). Since the tonsils are in that area, they are usually also infected (tonsillitis).
- **Colds (URIs).** Most sore throats are part of a cold. In fact, a sore throat may be the only symptom for the first 24 hours.
- **Influenza.** A sore throat can be the first symptom in flu infections.
- **Viral tonsillitis.** Some viruses cause a sore throat without any nasal symptoms.

Prevention of Spread to Others

- Good hand washing can prevent spread of infection.

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Most tonsil infections are just part of a cold and caused by a virus.
- A cough, hoarse voice or nasal discharge points to a cold as the cause.
- If a sore throat is the only symptom, it's still usually viral. A fever may also be present.
- Viral tonsil infections can be treated at home.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. **Sore Throat Pain Relief:**
 - Age over 1 year. Can sip warm fluids such as chicken broth or apple juice. Some children prefer cold foods such as popsicles or ice cream.
 - Age over 6 years. Can also suck on hard candy or lollipops. Butterscotch seems to help.
 - Age over 8 years. Can also gargle. Use warm water with a little table salt added. A liquid antacid can be added instead of salt. Use Mylanta or the store brand. No prescription is needed.
 - Medicated throat sprays or lozenges are generally not helpful.
3. **Pain Medicine:**
 - To help with the pain, give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Use as needed.
4. **Fever:**
 - For fevers above 102° F (39° C), give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Note: Lower fevers are important for fighting infections.
 - For ALL fevers: Keep your child well hydrated. Give lots of cold fluids.
5. **Antibiotics Not Needed:**
 - Antibiotics are not helpful for viral infections.
 - They can only kill bacteria.
6. **Fluids and Soft Diet:**
 - Try to get your child to drink adequate fluids.
 - Goal: Keep your child well hydrated.
 - Cold drinks, milk shakes, popsicles, slushes, and sherbet are good choices.
 - **Solids.** Offer a soft diet. Also avoid foods that need much chewing. Avoid citrus, salty, or spicy foods. Note: Fluid intake is much more important than eating any solids.
 - Swollen tonsils can make some solid foods hard to swallow. Cut food into smaller pieces.
7. **What to Expect:**
 - Most often, sore throats with a viral illness last 4 or 5 days.
 - Other cold symptoms may last longer.
8. **Return to School:**
 - Your child can return to school after the fever is gone.
 - Your child should feel well enough to join in normal activities.

Call Your Doctor If

- Trouble breathing or drooling occurs
- Sore throat with a cold lasts more than 5 days
- Fever lasts more than 3 days
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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