



University of North Carolina Wilmington
Abrons Student Health Center

INSTRUCTION SHEET: SORE THROAT (PHARYNGITIS)

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed infectious pharyngitis (an infection causing your sore throat).

In addition to throat pain, infectious pharyngitis can cause fever, chills, fatigue, mild headache, and mild stomach ache.

Throat infections are caused by germs (viruses and bacteria). Viral infections are more common; they are not treatable with antibiotics. Fortunately, even without treatment, most viral throat infections clear up after a few days. Bacterial infections usually last longer and cause more discomfort; bacterial infections are treatable with antibiotics.

Bacterial throat infections are most often caused by a *Strep* species of bacteria; the infection is called a strep throat.

Unusual causes of throat infection exist, as well. Rarely, a bacterial species immune to commonly-prescribed antibiotics causes infection: The infection can worsen despite treatment. Also, a viral infection such as mononucleosis can cause a *prolonged* sore throat.

MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR THROAT INFECTION:

1. Rest. Drink plenty of fluids. Help your body fight the infection.
2. Over-the-counter pain medications can help ease the discomfort of a sore throat. Acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen, or naproxen can be taken, depending on individual preferences.
3. If an antibiotic is prescribed for bacterial infection, take the medicine until gone. Stopping the antibiotic too soon can result in return of infection.
4. Gargle with warm salt water (1/2 tsp. in 1 cup) or spray the throat with an over-the-counter sore throat medicine to help relieve the discomfort temporarily.
5. **IF YOU WORSEN, SEEK MEDICAL CARE PROMPTLY.** Seek immediate care if 1) the throat swells so much that it is noisy or difficult to breathe, or 2) you are sick out-of-proportion to a throat infection (high fever not decreasing with treatment, stiff neck, rash, severe headache, etc.).
6. The infection can take several days to improve, even with treatment. However, if you are not showing progressive improvement over four to five days, return to the Student Health Center or see your personal/referral provider promptly.