

Self Care Briefing for Clinicians: Acute Sore Throat

Summary

A sore throat due to a viral or bacterial cause is a self-limiting condition. Symptoms resolve within 3 days in 40% of people, and within 1 week in 85% of people, irrespective of whether the sore throat is due to streptococcal infection.

There is little evidence to suggest that treatments such as lozenges or throat sprays help to treat the cause of sore throat and patients should be advised to take simple painkillers and implement some self care measures such as gargling with warm salty water (adults only) instead.

Recommendations for clinicians

- Provide the patient with a 'non-prescription' sheet or a patient information leaflet to promote education about self-limiting conditions suitable for self care when appropriate.
- Advise patients of safe and effective self care measures:
 - Drink plenty of fluids but avoid hot drinks.
 - Gargle with warm salty water (adults only).
 - Avoid smoking or smoky places.
 - Suck on ice cubes/lollies.
 - Sore throats will usually resolve without treatment within 7-8 days.
- Advise patients to seek medical attention and consider treatment with a prescription in the following circumstances:
 - Symptoms do not improve after a week. When the patient is immunocompromised.
 - When symptoms are reoccurring often.
 - Patients who have a very high fever and sore throat.

Examples of over-the-counter products available to buy

Please advise patients that suggested prices are, a guide, correct at the time of writing and are subject to change.

- Paracetamol (tablets): Not licensed for children under 10 years old (£0.25-£3.00 for 16 tablets/capsules).
- Paracetamol (suspension): Not licensed for children under 2 months old (£2.50-£4.50 for 100ml).

- Ibuprofen (tablets): Not licensed for children under 12 years old (£0.35-£4.00 for 16 tablets/capsules).
- Ibuprofen (suspension): Not licensed for children under 3 months old (£2.50-£4.00 for 100ml).

Further information

- [Selfcare forum](#)
- [NHS.uk](#)
- [Patient UK](#)

Document History

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