



KAISER PERMANENTE®

Sore Throat and Strep Throat

Typically, a sore throat is caused by a virus and is accompanied by a cold. A more persistent sore throat may be caused by mononucleosis, a viral infection that may last for weeks. Mild sore throats, however, can simply be caused by smoking, allergies, air pollution, low humidity, yelling, or even by breathing through your mouth while sleeping. This is especially true when your nose is blocked. Yet another cause of sore throat is stomach acid that backs up into the throat.

Strep throat is a specific kind of sore throat that is caused by a bacterium called Streptococcus. This tends to affect children between the ages of 4 and 11 more than people who are younger and older. Symptoms of Strep throat are likely to include a sore throat with a fever, white or yellow coating on the tonsils, or swollen glands. In children, Strep throat may also be accompanied by a stomach ache, nausea, vomiting, or lack of energy.

To reduce your chances of getting a sore throat or a Strep throat, avoid things that irritate your throat—such as smoke and yelling—and stay away from people with colds, Strep throat, or mononucleosis. Also, drink plenty of liquids—as much as six to eight glasses of water a day.

If you have a viral sore throat, you usually don't need to see a health care professional. Here are six tips for home treatment:

- 1.) Gargle with warm water that has 1/4 teaspoon of salt dissolved in four ounces of water;
- 2.) Drink more fluids, and try honey, lemon, and weak tea to make your throat feel better;
- 3.) Don't smoke and stay away from "second hand smoke";
- 4.) To relieve pain and to reduce fever, try acetaminophen, aspirin, or ibuprofen, but don't give aspirin to children or teenagers;
- 5.) Try sucking on over-the-counter throat lozenges, cough drops, or hard candy;
- 6.) If you think stomach acid may be causing your sore throat, you might want to learn more about Heartburn. Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook* for advice on what to do. You can also listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone message on Heartburn if you prefer.

If you suspect you have a Strep throat, you should call your health care professional. Don't put the appointment off because a Strep throat needs to be treated with antibiotics. Symptoms of Strep throat include a sore throat plus two of the following three symptoms:

- 1.) A fever of 101 degrees or higher;
- 2.) White or yellow coating on the tonsils;
- 3.) Swollen glands in the neck.

You should also call your health care professional if you have difficulty breathing; if a child with a sore throat drools a great deal; if a mild sore throat lasts longer than two weeks; or if a rash accompanies your sore throat. A sore throat accompanied by a rash may indicate scarlet fever, which also requires treatment with antibiotics.



For additional health information you can trust:

- Log on to our members-only Web site at www.kaiserpermanente.org/california, then click the "Kaiser Permanente Members Only" button
- Visit your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center
- Check your Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone messages at 1-800-33 ASK ME (1-800-332-7563)

To get your free Handbook and Healthphone Directory, call 1-800-464-4000.

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent health problems or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor or other health care professional.

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REGIONAL HEALTH EDUCATION