

Tonsillitis in children

The tonsils are small glands at the back of the throat that can become infected, causing a sore throat.

This infection is known as tonsillitis and may be due to viral or bacterial infection.

Viral infections usually get better on their own without antibiotics, but bacterial infections may need a course of antibiotics, either by mouth (oral) or intravenous (IV). Most people will have tonsillitis at some point in their life with no serious consequences.

Symptoms

Tonsillitis symptoms include sore throat, fever, and feeling generally unwell. Your child may also have an earache, difficulty opening their mouth, and/or have swollen lymph nodes in their neck.

If you look into their mouth, you may notice that their tonsils look swollen, red, and may be covered with whitish spots of pus.

Symptoms usually go away by themselves in 3 to 4 days.

Treatment options

At home treatments

If your child has tonsillitis, it is important they get plenty of rest and drink plenty of fluids. Paracetamol and ibuprofen will help with pain and fever.

Diffiam, is a medicine which comes as a spray or mouthwash, can be applied directly to the tonsils for pain relief. You can buy it at your local pharmacy.

Going to the GP

You should go to GP if your child has white pus spots on their tonsils, has difficulty eating or drinking even after taking painkillers, or the symptoms do not start getting better after 4 days. If the GP thinks the infection is caused by a bacteria, they may prescribe antibiotics to treat it.

Going to the hospital

If your child cannot swallow their own saliva or finds it too painful to swallow antibiotics, they may need to go to hospital for IV antibiotics and IV fluids, which are given directly into the blood stream. They may also have blood tests that to find out if they have a viral or bacterial infection.

Once they are able to swallow again, they may be discharged home with a course of oral antibiotics to complete the recovery process. It is important that they take the entire course of antibiotics, even if they feel better earlier. They should also continue to rest and drink plenty of fluids.

If the infection is due to Epstein Barr Virus, it is important that they avoid contact sports and horse riding for the next 6 weeks. This virus can lead to an enlarged spleen, which is more likely to rupture if injured.

Surgery

If your child has multiple episodes of tonsillitis requiring antibiotics per year or complications associated with tonsillitis, we can offer an operation to remove the tonsils once the infection settles down. This operation, called a tonsillectomy, is performed under a general anaesthetic, where your child will be asleep and does not feel any pain.

It is usually done in our children's day surgery unit and your child can go home later in the afternoon, unless there is a reason your child needs to stay overnight. Children usually need 1 to 2 weeks off school afterwards to recuperate.

There are different types of tonsil surgery. We talk to you in advance about the treatment options and recommend which is most suitable for your child.

For more information you can read our leaflet called **Your child's tonsil surgery**. It explains more about the different types of surgery, how to prepare, risks, and recovery. This leaflet is on our website, or you can ask a member of staff for a copy.

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline, **phone** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), **phone** 020 7188 8801 **email** gstt.pals-gstt@nhs.net To make a complaint contact the resolution department **phone** 020 7188 3514 **email** gstt.complaints-publicfolder@nhs.net

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please contact the service your child is seeing.

NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day, **phone** 111 **web** www.111.nhs.uk

NHS website

This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing, **web** www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

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email gstt.members@nhs.net **web**
www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership



Leaflet number: 5483/VER1

Date published: March 2024

Review date: March 2027

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A list of sources is
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