

Sore throats and Breastfeeding

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A sore throat is normally a symptom of a bacterial or viral infection and may be the first sign of a cold. The soreness can be accompanied by swollen tonsils (tonsillitis), enlarged and tender glands in the neck, difficulty in swallowing due to pain. It is common to have a temperature, headache, and general aches and pains.

Treating a sore throat

Sore throats are common and are best treated with simple remedies. Most sore throats pass without the need for GP intervention. Your local community pharmacist can help with simple, effective remedies.

Treatments which are compatible with breastfeeding

- Over-the-counter painkillers, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen taken regularly to relieve the temperature and general aches
- Anything which keeps your throat moist (has a demulcent effect) – sucking pastilles or lozenge, sipping honey and lemon, sucking raisins or other similar natural remedies or teas will help symptoms
- Anaesthetic throat sweets e.g. Strepsils®, Dequacaine® help to relieve pain
- Anaesthetic throat sprays e.g. Difflam®, Chloraseptic®, Pharmacy own brands anaesthetise the throat without numbing the tongue
- Throat rinses e.g. Oraldene®, Difflam®, TCP® can help
- Regular inhalation of steam, with menthol crystals if you prefer, will relieve dryness and nasal congestion. Avoid keeping the room in which you are sitting from being over heated with a dry atmosphere.
- Rest, drink lots of fluids, keep up your vitamin C intake
- Echinacea and Zinc supplements can be taken

Antibiotics are not usually prescribed for a sore throat, unless it is particularly severe or you are considered at risk of a more serious infection. Consult your GP you have a persistent high temperature above 38C (100.4F), which does not go down after taking medication or if your symptoms do not improve at all within a week.

How long will a sore throat last? (NHS Choices)

A recent UK study looked at people who book a GP appointment for a sore throat (probably those with worse symptoms). The results found that in 50% of cases, moderately bad symptoms of a sore throat had settled seven days after the onset of the illness and in 80% of cases had gone after 10 days.

To talk to a mum who knows about breastfeeding call the National Breastfeeding Helpline 0300 100 0212

Calls to 0300 numbers cost no more than calls to UK numbers starting 01 and 02 and will be part of any inclusive minutes that apply to your provider and call package.

When to seek medical help (NHS Choices)

Make an appointment to see your GP if you have a persistent high temperature above 38C (100.4F), which does not go down after taking medication, your symptoms do not improve within a week, you have a specific risk e.g. have had spleen removed, take anti-thyroid drugs, are on drugs which impair your immune response or feel significantly unwell.

See also factsheet on cough and cold treatments

Bibliography

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- LactMed database <http://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/sis/htmlgen?LACTMED>
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