

Will I have to stay in hospital?

Yes, if you are unable to swallow and need the abscess draining and antibiotics into your vein.

How long will I be off work?

You will need to rest at home for at least one week.
If you require a sick certificate please ask one of the nurses

When will I be seen in the out-patient clinic?

It may not be necessary for you to be seen again in the out-patient clinic. However the doctor may arrange a further appointment and if this is your second quinsy, a tonsillectomy may be recommended.

After you leave hospital

If you have any problems please call the number below for advice:

Where to get further information

NHS Direct: <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>

ENT UK: http://www.entuk.org/patient_info/

Information has been used from Prodigy patient information leaflets Sore Throat, Tonsillitis <http://www.prodigy.nhs.uk> © EMIS and PIP 2004

© Royal National Ear Nose & Throat Hospital /
Patient Information Programme 2007
www.royalfree.nhs.uk

Royal Free Hampstead 
NHS Trust

About sore throats and quinsy

This leaflet gives information about having a sore throat, and quinsy. Please ask staff if you have any questions.

Sore throat (pharyngitis)

This is very common and normally gets better after a few days and is usually caused by a virus infection. You may also get a hoarse voice, mild cough, fever, headache, feel sick, feel tired, and the glands in your neck may swell. It may be painful to swallow. Symptoms typically get worse over 2-3 days and then gradually go, usually within a week. You may also develop a sore throat if you have a cold or flu-like illness.

What is tonsillitis?

Tonsillitis is an infection of the tonsils at the back of the mouth. A sore throat is the common symptom. In addition, you may also have a cough, fever, headache, feel sick, feel tired, painful swallowing, and swollen neck glands. Pus may appear as white spots on the enlarged tonsils. Symptoms typically get worse over 2-3 days and then gradually go, usually within a week.

What is the treatment for sore throat and tonsillitis?

- **Not treating** is an option as many throat infections are mild and soon get better.
- **Have plenty to drink** It is tempting not to drink very much if it is painful to swallow. You may become mildly dehydrated if you don't drink much, particularly if you also have a fever. Mild dehydration can make headaches and tiredness much worse.
- **Paracetamol** or **ibuprofen** ease pain, headache, and fever. To keep symptoms to a minimum it is best to take a dose at regular intervals as recommended on the packet of medication rather than 'now and then'. For

example, take paracetamol four times a day until symptoms ease.

- **Aspirin gargles** may ease the soreness. (There is little research evidence to confirm that this is effective. However, it is a popular treatment and may be worth a try.) Dissolve some soluble aspirin in water and gargle for 3-4 minutes. You can do this 3-4 times a day. Spit out the aspirin after gargling and try not to swallow it. (Note: you should not give aspirin to children under 16.)
- **Other gargles, lozenges, and sprays** that you can buy at pharmacies may help to soothe a sore throat. However, they do not shorten the illness. They tend to be expensive, and may do little extra to ease symptoms than the above measures, nor prevent further infections.

Do I need an antibiotic?

Usually not. Viruses cause most throat and tonsil infections, although some are caused by bacteria. Without tests, it is usually not possible to tell if it is a viral or bacterial infection. Antibiotics kill bacteria, but do not kill viruses. However, an antibiotic is not thought to make much difference even if a bacterium is the cause. Your immune system usually clears these infections within a few days whether caused by viruses or bacteria. Also, antibiotics can sometimes cause side effects such as diarrhoea, rash, and stomach upsets. So, they are not commonly prescribed for a sore throat.

An antibiotic may be advised if the infection is severe, if it is not easing after a few days, or if your immune system is not working properly (for example, if you have had your spleen removed or if you are taking chemotherapy, etc). For these to be effective you must complete the course.

Occasionally a throat or tonsil infection is due to an uncommon cause, such as glandular fever. See a doctor if symptoms are severe, or if they do not ease within 3-4 days.

Will I have to stay in hospital?

It may be necessary for you to stay in hospital if the treatments already mentioned do not work.

What about having my tonsils taken out?

Removing the tonsils (tonsillectomy) may be an option if you have frequent and severe bouts of tonsillitis - that is, five or more infections over a year. Also, when each infection is severe enough to affect normal life (such as needing time off work or school). The value of tonsillectomy is uncertain. Throat infections are not prevented if the tonsils are removed. However, for some people, the number and severity of throat infections may be reduced after tonsillectomy.

About quinsy

What is quinsy?

Quinsy is usually caused by a streptococcal (bacteria) infection as a complication of an acute sore throat such as tonsillitis. An abscess forms, usually on one side of the throat only, with the swelling behind the tonsil near the back of the roof of the mouth. Your uvula (floppy tissue hanging down in the middle of your throat) is often pushed across to the side without the abscess.

Symptoms can include a very painful sore throat, fever, and difficulty swallowing your saliva, resulting in dribbling, generally feeling unwell and neck swelling because of the abscess.

What happens next?

Antibiotics are given and may be given directly into your vein (intravenously). If it doesn't get better then drainage of the abscess is necessary, which provides rapid relief. This is done by making a small cut in the abscess under local anaesthetic. Painkillers may also be prescribed.