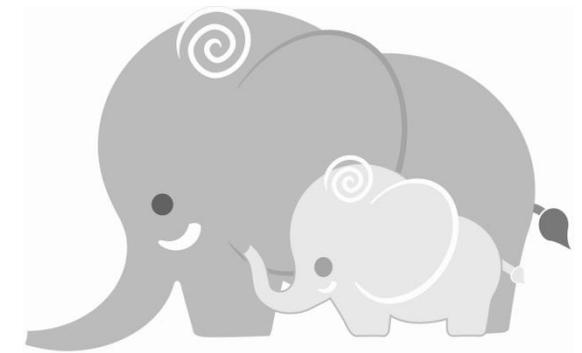


Acute Paediatric Department Information for Parents, Carers and Older children

Tonsillitis in Children



Where can I find more information?
www.nhs.uk/conditions

Who can I contact if I am worried?
Community Nursing Team: 01204 463939
(Patients with a Bolton GP only)

Ask your GP for more information or for the
contact details of your local team

F5 Ward – 01204 390715
E5 Ward – 01204 390405

How is tonsillitis treated?

There is no specific treatment for most cases of tonsillitis; these can help children feel better:-

- Paracetamol or ibuprofen
- Drinking plenty of fluids
- Cold drinks, ice pops or ice cream
- Getting plenty of rest
- Throat sprays – you can buy these over the counter. Ask for benzydamine and follow the instructions on the spray. For children under 6 years you will need to know their weight as 1 spray is given for each 4kg of weight
- Lozenges for older children –over the counter
- Gargling with salty water for older children (mix half a teaspoon with 250ml (8oz) of water, gargle and spit)

Antibiotics

Research shows that antibiotics do not speed recovery in most cases and can cause side effects. However, if a bacterial infection is suspected, antibiotics may be prescribed. The course is usually 10 days as shorter courses may not get rid of streptococcus. Penicillin is the usual first choice. It does not taste very nice so it may be difficult to get young children to take. Other antibiotics have higher risks of side effects so it is best to try as hard as you can to get your child to take it. If bacterial infection is suspected and your child cannot take antibiotics by mouth (for example if they are being sick), or they are not getting better, occasionally antibiotics given through a drip may be needed in hospital.

When should I seek help?

- Not showing any improvement after 48 hrs
- Being sick and not keeping antibiotics down
- Not able to drink and becoming dehydrated. Signs include dry mouth, sunken eyes, not weeing much, being pale or drowsy
- Not able to open the mouth or swallow
- Drowsiness or not responding properly
- Rash that doesn't fade when pressed on with a glass
- Seems very unwell

Do not worry if your child is not eating normally for a few days, as long as they are able to drink liquids. Their throat will be sore and they may not feel hungry.

Tonsillitis - Important Points

- **Tonsillitis causes a sore throat, fever and difficulty swallowing**
- **Most cases will get better by themselves within 1 week**
- **Antibiotics do not usually make the symptoms go any faster**
- **Use pain relief, throat sprays or lozenges to help**

We recognise that not everyone will find this document easy to read. We can arrange for large print, audio tape versions and for summaries or explanations in other languages. Please call 01204 390193 if we can help.
IPG1830 Review 01/2019

Tonsillitis in Children

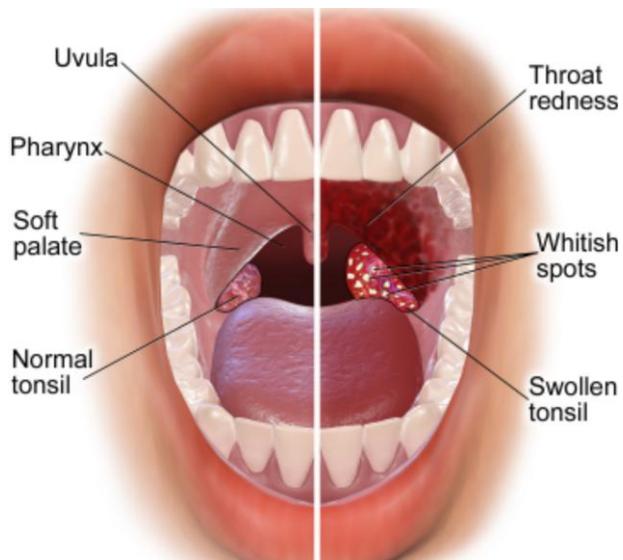
What is tonsillitis?

Tonsillitis is inflammation of the tonsils. It is usually caused by a viral infection or less commonly by a bacterial infection.

The tonsils

The tonsils are two small glands that sit on either side of the throat. In young children they help fight germs and act as a barrier against infection. When the tonsils become infected they trap the infection and stop it spreading further into the body.

As a child's immune system develops and gets stronger, the tonsils become less important and usually shrink. In most people, the body is able to fight infection without the tonsils. Removal of the tonsils will usually only be recommended if they're causing problems such as severe or repeated episodes of tonsillitis.



What are the symptoms of tonsillitis?

A sore throat is the commonest symptom. This can make swallowing difficult. Others include:-

- High temperature (fever) over 38 °C (100.4F)
- Coughing
- Headache
- Feeling sick
- Feeling tired
- Pain in the ears
- Swollen, painful glands in the neck
- Loss of voice or changes to the voice

Symptoms usually get better after three to four days and have usually disappeared after 1 week.

What causes tonsillitis?

Viral tonsillitis

Tonsillitis is most commonly caused by a virus. Viruses that cause tonsillitis include the common cold virus, flu viruses and the glandular fever virus.

Glandular fever

A virus called Epstein-Barr Virus (EBV) can cause tonsillitis as part of glandular fever. This often causes more severe symptoms including swollen glands, fever and tiredness. Glandular fever takes longer to get better and it will usually be 1-2 weeks before symptoms settle. Tiredness may last several weeks and occasionally lasts several months.

Bacterial tonsillitis

Bacterial tonsillitis can be caused by a number of different bacteria. The commonest is a bug called group A streptococcus.

How can you tell what is causing tonsillitis?

It's difficult to tell just by looking at a child's throat whether they have a virus or a bacterial infection. There are four main signs that tonsillitis is caused by a bacterial infection rather than a viral infection. They are:

- High temperature
- White pus-filled spots on the tonsils
- No cough
- Swollen and tender glands in the neck

If there are 3 or more of these, it's much more likely to be bacterial and antibiotics are more likely to be prescribed. If there are 2 or less, bacterial tonsillitis is less likely. A swab of the throat can confirm if it is bacterial. However as results usually take 2-4 days, your doctor will often make a decision based on how unwell your child is. As most cases of tonsillitis will get better by themselves, it may be reasonable to wait for results or to give a prescription for antibiotics for your child to start if the symptoms are not getting better after a day or two.

Is tonsillitis infectious?

Tonsillitis itself isn't contagious but the infections that cause it are. These types of infections spread easily, often by coughing or sneezing, so it's important to try to avoid passing the infection on to others by staying away from school or nursery until the symptoms have passed. Make sure you wash your hands after caring for your child.