A sore throat may be caused by an infection from a virus or bacteria. It may be a symptom of a cold, mononucleosis (mono), sinus drainage, allergies, or tonsillitis. Sore throats can be the result of smoking or being around others who smoke. Most sore throats will get better on their own, without medicine. Antibiotics are given only for infections caused by certain bacteria, such as strep.

**Things to do for a sore throat:**

- Drink fluids – cold or warm depending on what you like. You may want to avoid citrus juices and milk.
- Suck on hard candy or throat lozenges to help soothe the soreness.
- Gargle with warm salt water (1/4 teaspoon of salt in an 8-ounce glass of water).
- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen for fever over 102° F (39° C). Be sure to follow the package directions for the amount to take. Do not take more than 5 doses of acetaminophen or 4 doses of ibuprofen in 24 hours.
- Use a cool mist humidifier to moisten room air if your sore throat feels dry. Be sure to replace the water in the humidifier every day. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning the humidifier.
- Do not smoke. Avoid exposure to cigarette smoke. Tell others not to smoke around you or in your house.

**Special instructions for strep throat:**

If you had a throat culture to test for strep throat, call your health care provider's office in 24-48 hours for the results. If the culture is positive for strep bacteria, you will need an antibiotic. You need to continue taking the antibiotic prescribed until all is gone. You can go back to school and continue your regular activities when you feel up to it. Wash your hands frequently. Encourage everyone living in your home to wash their hands frequently also. Do not share drinking and eating utensils. Throw away your toothbrush (and get a new one) 48 hours after starting antibiotic.

**Call your health care provider or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188 if:**

- Have ear pain.
- Feel very sick.
- Run a fever over 102° F (39° C) for more than three (3) days.

**Go to the emergency room if you:**

- Are not able to swallow.
- Have breathing trouble that is not due to a stuffy nose.