



Information for Patients & Caregivers

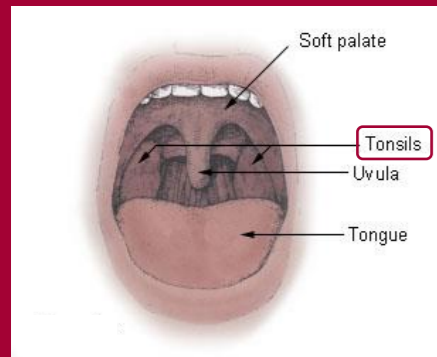
What you need to know about the
Tonsillitis?

Valid From: 28th July 2019
Date of Next Revision: 28th July 2021

+ WHAT ARE THE TONSILS?

The tonsils are glands found at the back of the throat which help the body fight off infection.

There are two glands, one on either side of the throat:



Tonsillitis is the inflammation of the tonsil glands that results in the glands becoming swollen, red and sore.

As a result, people with tonsillitis may experience:

- A severe sore throat
- White spots on the tonsils
- Fever
- Headaches
- Generally feeling unwell and nauseated
- A runny nose

+ WHAT CAUSES TONSILLITIS?

Most cases of tonsillitis are caused by viruses which are spread from person to person, in droplets of water from the nose or mouth.

Viruses are tiny crystals that are so small they can't even be seen with a microscope. They take over the machinery of the cells lining the nose and throat and use the cells to make copies of themselves.

The body's immune system will eventually kill the affected cells and the viruses, but this can take up to a

week in adults and up to 2 weeks in children.

But, tonsillitis can also be caused by bacteria. Bacteria are different to viruses. They are much larger and can be seen under a microscope. They are different because they are living organisms that don't take over the machinery of cells.

ANTIBIOTICS DON'T WORK ON VIRUSES

Antibiotics are medicines that can kill bacteria but have no effect on viruses. They can also cause a lot of side effects and can sometimes be harmful.

Using too many antibiotics can lead to bacteria becoming resistant to their effects (**Antibiotic Resistance**). This in turn results in infections that are difficult or impossible to treat and is a growing problem in Qatar.

+ WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE TONSILLITIS?

Whether or not the cause is viral or bacterial, most people with tonsillitis will get better by themselves after a week.

Medicine can be bought from a pharmacy to help with some of the symptoms. These include:

- Paracetamol
- Ibuprofen
- Throat lozenges

Be sure to rest if you feel unwell and drink enough water to stay hydrated. Warm drinks can also help soothe a sore throat.

CHECK WITH YOUR PHARMACIST TO MAKE SURE IT IS SAFE FOR YOU TO USE THESE MEDICINES

TAKE TIME OFF WORK OR SCHOOL IF YOU, OR YOUR CHILD, HAVE A FEVER TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF INFECTION



+ WHEN SHOULD I SEE A DOCTOR?

See your primary care doctor, if:

- Your symptoms are severe
- You don't feel any better after 7 days
- The symptoms are getting worse
- You are pregnant
- You have a long-term illness
- You are known to have a problem with your immune system

Your doctor will talk to you about your symptoms and examine your throat. He or she will make an assessment as to whether they think the infection is viral or bacterial and may perform some tests.

If they believe the infection is bacterial and your symptoms are severe, or have not got better after 7 days, your doctor will most likely prescribe an antibiotic.

ALWAYS MAKE SURE YOUR DOCTOR KNOWS ALL THE MEDICATION YOU ARE TAKING AND WHETHER OR NOT YOU HAVE ANY ALLERGIES



+ SYMPTOMS TO WATCH OUT FOR

The symptoms of tonsillitis can be similar to those of serious illnesses. Complications of tonsillitis can also develop in some people.

If you, or your child, have any of the following symptoms, call an ambulance or go immediately to an Emergency Department or Pediatric Emergency Centre:

- DIFFICULTY BREATHING
- BLUISH-COLOURED LIPS
- WORSENING ABILITY TO SWALLOW
- DROOLING
- DRY EYES
- DRY MOUTH
- LOW URINE VOLUME
- FEVER WITH COLD HANDS OR FEET
- NECK STIFFNESS
- PAIN ON LOOKING AT BRIGHT LIGHTS
- SEVERE HEADACHE
- A SKIN RASH

Surgical removal of the tonsils can only be performed if at least one of the following apply:

- At least 7 episodes of tonsillitis have occurred in the past year; or
- At least 5 episodes have occurred in each of the last 2 years; or
- At least 3 episodes have occurred in each of the last 3 years; or
- Quality of life is being severely affected; or
- There is a complication of tonsillitis that is causing a problem.



+ PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF INFECTION

The viruses and bacteria that can cause tonsillitis are spread by coughing, sneezing, kissing or touch.

To prevent the people around you from getting tonsillitis from you or your child, do the following:

- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Don't share towels with other people.
- Avoid shaking hands, hugging, or kissing others.
- Don't allow children to share toys if one of the children has a sore throat.

IN YOUNG CHILDREN WITH MILD SORE THROATS, WATCHING AND WAITING IS PROVEN TO BE BETTER FOR THEM THAN REMOVING THE TONSILS

+ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Ministry of Public Health has published a National Clinical Guideline advising doctors on how to treat patients with tonsillitis.

The Guideline is available to the public from the MOPH website:

www.moph.gov.qa

