

## What next?

- In nearly all cases, a tonsillitis or sore throat clears away without leaving any problems.
- Tonsils seem to grow during childhood and then shrink around the age of four. By the time the child reaches adulthood, their tonsils will have disappeared almost completely. This is because they are no longer needed, as the child's body will have other defence mechanisms to fight against infection.

## Complications with tonsillitis (quinsy)

- Complications with tonsillitis are very rare. If they happen, they mostly affect young children aged two to four.
- Sometimes you can get a pocket filled with pus (an abscess) between your tonsils and the wall of your throat. This is called quinsy.
- Quinsy is an uncommon condition and is usually caused by a bacterial infection.
- It usually develops just on one side. It may follow tonsillitis or develop without tonsillitis. It is treated with antibiotics, but also the pus often needs to be drained with a small operation.

## Useful resources/contacts

- Your local pharmacy - [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk).
- Your GP surgery - please contact your GP when the surgery is open, and call 111 when the GP is closed.
- NHS 111 provides advice for urgent care needs and is open 24hrs a day. They can arrange urgent GP appointments and calls from landlines and mobiles are free.
- NHS Choices - [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk).
- [www.whittington.nhs.uk](http://www.whittington.nhs.uk).

## Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or [whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net)

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please contact us on 020 7288 3182. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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# Tonsillitis in Children

## A parent's guide



## What are the tonsils

• The tonsils are areas of tissue on both sides of the throat, at the back of the mouth. Children's tonsils help them to build up immunity and fight infection. In many children, the tonsils become repeatedly infected with bacteria and viruses, which make them swell and become painful.

## What is tonsillitis

• Tonsillitis is the word used when the tonsils are infected so swell and become painful. Most throat and tonsil infections are caused by viruses but some are caused by bacteria.

## What are the signs/symptoms of tonsillitis

• Tonsillitis can feel like a bad cold or flu. The tonsils at the back of your throat will be red and swollen.

• Symptoms of viral tonsillitis include:

- Sore throat
- Difficulty swallowing
- A fever and feeling generally tired.
- Coughing & some ear pain.

• Symptoms of more severe infection include:

- All of the above
- Swollen glands in your neck
- White pus-filled spots on the tonsils
- Bad breath

### **You need EMERGENCY help in your local Accident & Emergency – call 999**

- Sudden swelling to the inside of the mouth or throat.
- Any difficulty opening the mouth, speaking or swallowing.
- Any difficulty swallowing, or any drooling (especially if it's not normal for your child)
- They are struggling to breathe - breathing very fast or very slowly...
- Your child becomes unresponsive or very difficult to rouse.

### **You need to contact a doctor / nurse today. Ring the GP, if they are closed call 111**

- Your child is not improving despite intervention and you are generally worried.
- Your child is not drinking and has signs of dehydration, which include dry mouth, no tears, sunken/darken eyes.
- Your child is having reduced feeds; they should be taking more than 50% of their usual volume.
- Your child is having some mild – moderate increased respiratory effort, breathing slightly faster or deeper than normal. This should ease when they are asleep.
- Your baby is under 12 weeks old and is becoming more sleepy
- Your child has on-going fevers

### **Self-Care – use advice on this leaflet, contact 111 or NHS choices for advice**

- Your child reacts well to calpol or ibuprofen, you can administer this regularly for the duration of their illness.
- Your child has been happy, interactive and playing as usual.
- Your child is eating and drinking, and able to swallow food & liquids
- The coughing is not causing them any bother.

## Treatment

- Mild tonsillitis often doesn't need any treatment, it is important to drink plenty of water. Paracetamol or ibuprofen will help to ease pain, headache and high temperature.
- If the infection was caused by a virus, as most cases of tonsillitis are, antibiotics will not work so are not required. Most cases of tonsillitis disappear within a few days.