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## How to manage tonsillitis in children

Children pick up viruses all the time, particularly if they're at nursery or playgroups where illnesses can spread easily. It can be hard to know whether a poorly child has a cold or something else such as tonsillitis – an inflammation of the tonsils. So what are the signs of tonsillitis, and how can you treat it in your child?

### What is tonsillitis?

**Tonsillitis** is an inflammation of the tonsils and it's common in children, although adults and teenagers can get it too. It is normally caused by a virus, which spreads when we **cough**, sneeze, speak or are in physical contact with others. Sometimes, tonsillitis is caused by a bacterial infection.

### What are the symptoms of tonsillitis in children?

Tonsillitis can feel like a bad **cold** or **flu**, but the tonsils at the back of the throat – the two round lumps – will be red and swollen. The main symptoms in children and adults are a **sore throat**, difficulty swallowing, a high **temperature** of 38C or higher, a **cough**, **headaches**, feeling sick, **earache** and feeling tired.

Sometimes, the symptoms can be more severe – such as **swollen** glands in your neck or blisters on the **tonsils**.

### How to treat a child with tonsillitis?

**Tonsillitis** usually gets better on its own after a few days, but there are things you can do to help manage the symptoms and keep your child more comfortable.

- Make sure they get plenty of rest and **sleep**.

- Ensure your child drinks plenty of water, which can soothe the throat and prevent dehydration.
- Encourage your child to eat soft foods, such as soups, yoghurts or mashed potatoes and cooked vegetables, which can be easier to swallow if they have a sore throat.
- You can give your child paracetamol-based medicines, such as Calpol, which can reduce a [fever](#) and ease pain. You can also give them children's ibuprofen. It's important to make sure you are giving your child the correct dosage for their age or weight.
- Throat sprays may help ease sore throats, but they may not be suitable for younger children – speak to your local pharmacist about which ones that may be more suitable for your child.

## When to speak to your doctor if your child has tonsillitis

If your child's symptoms remain after four days or your child becomes more unwell, you should see your GP. You should also see your doctor if your child has pus-filled spots on their tonsils.

Complications caused by [tonsillitis](#) are very rare but include the development of an abscess called a [quinsy](#) – a fluid-filled blister in the throat – which can make it difficult to breathe. It's important to see your doctor or go to A&E if your child has difficulty breathing.

Most children get tonsillitis which is caused by a virus, but sometimes, it can be caused by bacteria. If this is the case, they may prescribe [antibiotics](#). If your child is prescribed antibiotics, it's important that they finish the full course of the medication.

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