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Strep Throat When to Call a Doctor

Call 911 or other emergency service immediately if a severe sore throat (pain being an 8 or 9 on a scale of 1 to 10) occurs along with the following symptoms, especially in a small child:

- Fever of 101° F (38.3° C) or more
- Drooling
- Difficulty breathing
- Head pushed forward to breathe

Call your health professional today if you have:

- A severe sore throat and fever over 101° F (38.3° C) that lasts longer than 1 to 2 days.
- A severe sore throat 2 to 5 days after you know you have been exposed to someone with strep.
- A sore throat that is not part of a cold that lasts longer than 2 to 3 days despite home treatment.
- A red rash that feels like sandpaper appears. This may indicate *scarlet fever*.
- Difficulty sleeping because your throat is blocked by swollen *tonsils or adenoids*.

Is it a Cold or the Flu?

Colds and flu are caused by viruses, which can't be killed with antibiotics. That's why going to the doctor usually doesn't help, and insisting your doctor write a prescription for antibiotics only contributes to the problem of antibiotic resistance.

Call the doctor, however, if you have:

- **A severe sore throat, especially if there are white patches in the back.**
- **High fever and headache for more than 3 to 4 days.**
- **Shortness of breath, chest pain, sudden dizziness, and coughing up something pink or reddish.**
- **Unusual symptoms that worry you.**

SYMPTOM	COLD	FLU
Fever	Slight	High fever (102°F-104°F) lasting 3-4 days
Headache	Rare	Common and bad
General aches & pains	Slight	Usual; often very bad
Fatigue & weakness	Very mild	Can last up to 2-3 weeks
Stuffy Nose	Common	Sometimes
Sneezing	Usual	Sometimes
Sore Throat	Common	Sometimes
Chest discomfort, hacking cough	Mild to medium	Common; can become very bad
Sputum (thick mucus)	Present/common	Rare