

PHARYNGITIS

Inflammation or infection of the pharynx. The pharynx is the hollow passage at the back of the throat. It is made up of the nasopharynx, which leads to the nose and oropharynx, which leads to the mouth. Pharyngitis is most frequently the result of a virus but may also be caused by a bacterial infection (*such as streptococcus*). In both cases germs are spread by person-to-person contact. Occasionally there may be another cause for pharyngitis, such as irritation or allergies.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF PHARYNGITIS INCLUDE:

- Sore throat and/or difficulty swallowing.
- Throat may be red, or covered with a white or gray membrane.
- Swollen glands in the neck.
- Fever or body aches.

LARYNGITIS

Inflammation around the vocal chords (*located below the pharynx*) resulting in a raspy, hoarse voice and sometimes cough. The most common cause of laryngitis is viral infection but it can also be caused by allergies; smoking; GERD; exposure to smoke or fumes; excessive talking, singing or yelling. Bacterial laryngitis is not common in the U.S. and antibiotic treatment is rarely indicated.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF LARYNGITIS INCLUDE:

- Raspy, hoarse voice or loss of voice.
- Sometimes cough.

GENERAL MEASURES

- Drink plenty of fluids. If swallowing solid food is painful, try a soft or liquid, low acid diet for a few days.
- Use a humidifier, especially at night when the air becomes cool and dry.
- Stop smoking.
- To help relieve pain, gargle often with double-strength tea or warm saltwater (1 teaspoon of salt to 8 oz. of water).
- For laryngitis vocal rest is essential. Refrain from talking, whispering, singing or humming until you have recovered.
- Wash hands often to help prevent the spread of germs to others.
- Avoid kissing or sharing cups or other utensils.
- Buy a new toothbrush after 48 hours to prevent recontamination.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Most cases of viral infection clear up on their own within a week. Antibiotics can successfully treat bacterial infections. Complications are rare and may include:

- Abscess (pus-filled area of infection) that may require drainage.
- Rheumatic fever, caused by a streptococcal bacterial infection that does not receive adequate antibiotic treatment. It is extremely rare.

MEDICATIONS

- For minor discomfort, you may use nonprescription medications, such as ibuprofen. Don't give aspirin to a child.
- Throat lozenges or sprays if age appropriate.
- Antibiotic medications can be useful for treating bacterial infection but are not effective against viruses. Finish the entire course of antibiotics, even if symptoms improve.
- Antibiotics and steroids interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use an alternative method of contraception for the remainder of the month after finishing your antibiotic or steroid prescription.

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF:

The following occur during treatment:

- Difficulty breathing, swallowing or muffled speech.
- Fever worsens.
- Severe headache develops.
- Skin rash or dark urine.
- Worsening cough or cough that produces colored or bloody sputum.
- No improvement after 3-4 days.