

# Tonsillitis

## Information for patients

This leaflet answers common questions about tonsillitis. If you would like further information, or have any particular worries, please do not hesitate to ask your nurse or doctor. In all cases, a doctor will explain the treatment to you and answer any questions you may have.

### What is tonsillitis?

Tonsillitis is an infection of the tonsils. The tonsils are glands found at either side of the back of the throat and help us fight infection. Sometimes they become infected themselves.

Most infections are viral and do not respond to antibiotics, but some are bacterial and may clear more quickly with antibiotics. The decision of whether to give you antibiotics depends on the type of infection we think you have based on our hospital observations and how severe your symptoms are. Symptoms may include any of the following:

- raised temperature or fever
- pain and difficulty in swallowing
- pooling and spitting out of saliva
- difficulty speaking
- earache
- general tiredness
- swollen neck glands
- dehydration

### What treatment have you had?

You have been admitted in A&E to begin treating your tonsillitis. You may have received any of the following treatments:

- a drip with intravenous fluids to help rehydrate you
- non-steroidal medication (eg ibuprofen) and paracetamol to reduce pain, inflammation and bring a temperature down
- antibiotics to treat the infection – this may be given through a drip at first and then switched to oral tablet form
- a corticosteroid, which prevents the release of substances that cause inflammation
- Difflam™ gargles to ease the irritation and inflammation

### Will I need to stay in hospital overnight?

It is unlikely that you will need to stay in hospital overnight if you can drink freely, swallow your saliva and take oral tablets. At this point it is likely safe for

you to recover at home. You will still be in some pain, but that is completely normal and you do not need to be in hospital.

If you are unable to swallow your own saliva or stay hydrated, we will consider admitting you to stay in hospital overnight. This is so we can continue to provide you with treatment to keep you safe and hydrated.

### **Advice and information for when you go home**

Often, the treatment you are given in A&E means you are able to go straight home. You may still experience some pain as a result of your tonsillitis, but you do not need to remain in hospital and should continue to follow the advice below until your symptoms have gone. You should:

- rest
- aim to drink at least two litres of fluids per day
- aim to eat normally – regular chewing and swallowing keeps the throat muscle active and encourages healing.

Providing you do not have any allergies or know of another reason why you should not take these medicines, eg a contraindication, please take paracetamol, ibuprofen and Difflam™ (all available from your local pharmacy) for five days. For information about how to take these and dosage, please follow the advice in the information leaflet included in the medicine box.

If you have been prescribed antibiotics, please take these as instructed.

If you are not feeling better after three days, you feel worse than before or are unable to swallow your own saliva or are short of breath, please return to hospital for further treatment.

### **Useful contacts**

Gill Martin, lead ear, nose and throat clinical nurse specialist

Available Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm only:

- Mobile: 07852 428 381
- Phone: 020 7794 0500 bleep: 3089

If you need advice outside of these times, please use the NHS 111 service.

If you have any feedback on this leaflet or for a list of references for it, please email: [rf.communications@nhs.net](mailto:rf.communications@nhs.net)

**This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please ask a member of staff.**