

# Pharyngitis: Complementary/Alternative Medicine

Sore throat with pain on swallowing Red throat with swollen tonsils  
Tender cervical lymph nodes

## QUICK REVIEW

- Over ninety percent of all cases of sore throat are caused by viruses.
- It is important to see a physician to rule out strep throat as the cause.
- Vitamin C is very important in the prevention of rheumatic fever.
- Goldenseal prevents the adherence of strep bacteria to the lining of the throat.
- Changing to a new toothbrush or washing the toothbrush in the dishwasher every seventeen to thirtyone days has been shown to help many people who are prone to a sore throat.
- If antibiotics are used or have been used, it is important to use a probiotic supplement containing *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Bifidobacterium bifidus*.

## TREATMENT SUMMARY

The time-honored advice to drink plenty of fluids, restrict food intake, and get plenty of rest is very important. We also recommend eliminating concentrated sugars and suspected food allergens from the diet. Because fever is a natural defense mechanism, it should be supported. Drugs to lower fever should not be used unless the body temperature approaches 104 degrees F, at which point the body's ability to control its temperature becomes impaired.

## Diet

Eliminate all sources of concentrated simple sugars: sugar, honey, fruit juice, dried fruit, etc. Restrict food intake to less than 1,000 calories/d, increase fluid intake to 8 ounces per hour, using water and the herbal teas listed below.

## Nutritional Supplements

- Vitamin A: 50,000 IU per day for up to two days in infants and up to one week in adults, or beta-carotene: 200,000 IU per day
- NOTE: Do not use vitamin A in women who are pregnant or at risk for pregnancy, due to a link with birth defects at high dosages.
- Vitamin C: 500 mg every two hours
  - Bioflavonoids: 1,000 mg per day
  - Zinc: take lozenges that supply 15-25 mg of elemental zinc (gluconate form without citrate mannitol or sorbitol); dissolve in the mouth every two waking hours after an initial double dose; continue for up to 3 days
  - Thymus extract: the equivalent of 120 mg pure polypeptides with molecular weights less than 10,000, or roughly 500 mg of the crude polypeptide fraction

## Botanical Medicines

- *Echinacea sp.*

Dried root (or as tea): 0.5-1 g three times per day

Freeze-dried plant: 325-650 mg three times per day

Juice of aerial portion of *E. purpurea* stabilized in 22% ethanol: 2-3 ml three times per day

Tincture (1:5): 2-4 ml three times per day

Fluid extract (1:1): 2-4 ml three times per day

Solid (dry powdered) extract (6.5:1 or 3.5% echinacoside): 150-300 mg three times per day

Goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*) The dosage should be based on berberine content. As there is a wide range of quality in goldenseal preparations, standardized extracts are recommended. Three times per day dosages are:

Dried root or as infusion (tea): 2-4 g Tincture (1:5): 6-12 ml (1 1/2-3 tsp) Fluid extract (1:1): 2-4 ml (1/2-1 tsp) Solid (powdered dry) extract (4:1 or 8-12% alkaloid content): 250--500 mg

Local Treatment

- Gargle with salt water twice per day: 1 tbsp salt in 8 ounces of warm water
- Ginger (*Zingiber officinalis*): strong tea made with fresh root