

# Pharmacy First: Acute Sore Throat

NICE NG84 (2017) | NHS England Pharmacy First PGD 2024

## ■ REFER NOW: Red Flags

- Suspected epiglottitis (stridor, drooling, high fever, cannot swallow): call 999 immediately
- Suspected quinsy (unilateral swelling, uvular deviation, muffled voice, drooling): refer to hospital urgently
- Unable to swallow fluids or medicines
- Severely unwell or signs of sepsis (e.g. altered mental state, mottled skin, severe lethargy): call 999

Do not supply antibiotics if any red flag is present.

## ■ CHECK: Eligibility

- Age 5 and over (under 5: outside Pharmacy First pathway. Refer appropriately.)
- Symptoms for 7 days or fewer (longer: refer to GP)
- Pregnancy/breastfeeding: follow current sore throat PGD. Erythromycin available for pregnant patients aged 16 and over who cannot take penicillin.
- Not severely immunocompromised (if severely immunocompromised: refer to GP same day)
- Confirm penicillin allergy status before supplying

Criterion	Score 1 if present	Score
<b>F: Fever in past 24 hours</b>	Fever present	+1
<b>E: Purulence</b>	Pus visible on tonsils	+1
<b>V: Attend within 3 days</b>	Within 3 days of onset	+1
<b>E: Severely inflamed tonsils</b>	Tonsils severely inflamed	+1
<b>R: No cough or coryza</b>	No cough and no runny nose	+1

Score	Strep probability	Action
0-1	13-18%	Self-care only. No antibiotic.
2-3	34-40%	Consider delayed antibiotic or self-care per pathway and clinical assessment.
4-5	62-65%	Assess against PGD criteria: supply antibiotics where appropriate.

## ✓ SUPPLY: Antibiotic Choices

- Adults and children 12+: Phenoxymethylpenicillin 500mg four times daily for 5 days
- Children 5-11: Phenoxymethylpenicillin oral solution, dose by weight (BNF for Children)
- Penicillin allergy (adults/12+): Clarithromycin 500mg twice daily for 5 days
- Penicillin allergy (children 5-11): Clarithromycin oral solution, dose by weight (BNF for Children)
- Pregnant patients (penicillin allergy): Erythromycin. See current sore throat PGD.

Phenoxymethylpenicillin preferred over amoxicillin. Use BNF for Children for paediatric doses.

**Documentation and safety netting:** Record all 5 FeverPAIN components separately, total score, management decision, antibiotic supplied, and safety-netting advice before the patient leaves. FeverPAIN guides but does not replace full clinical assessment. Safety net: urgent help if breathing difficulty, rapid worsening, or new rash. Note: absence of cough/coryza scores 1 point, not their presence.