Home Care after Treatment of a Sore Throat

You have been treated for a sore throat, also called pharyngitis. A sore throat is an inflammation or irritation of the throat.

Common signs of a sore throat

- Painful swallowing
- Fever
- Headache
- Joint pain and muscle aches
- Skin rashes
- Swollen lymph nodes in the neck

Causes of a sore throat

- **Viral infections** such as a cold, flu or mononucleosis are the most common causes of a sore throat. There is no antibiotic that is effective against a virus. This type of infection usually lasts 5 to 7 days.

- **Bacterial infections**, such as Group A streptococcus (strep throat), can also cause a sore throat. A bacterial infection is treated with an antibiotic by either a one-time injection (shot) or pills taken by mouth.

- A sore throat may also be caused by allergies, smoking, air pollution, inhaling irritating fumes and prolonged shouting. The irritating factor should be eliminated to stop your signs.
Your Care

- If you have been given an antibiotic, it is important to take all of the pills until they are gone.

- If you had a throat culture done, your doctor may want to be sure you have a bacterial infection before giving you antibiotics. If your culture is positive for bacteria, you will be called and a prescription for an antibiotic will be given to you.

- Tips to help you feel better:
  - Get plenty of rest.
  - Drink plenty of fluids.
  - Gargle several times a day with warm salt water (½ teaspoon of salt in 1 cup of water).
  - Use throat lozenges or sprays that you can buy over the counter.
  - Take over the counter pain relievers such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin). Children should not take aspirin.
  - Avoid smoking, alcohol, and hot or spicy foods.
  - Follow-up with your doctor as directed.

Call your doctor for follow-up care if:

- It becomes increasingly hard to breathe
- You are unable to keep fluids down
- Your fever is above 101 degrees F or 38 degrees C while you are taking acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- You develop a rash
- You do not feel better in several days
- You have swelling inside your mouth
- You are unable to open your mouth

Return to the Emergency Department right away or call 911 if you feel your sore throat is making it hard to breathe.