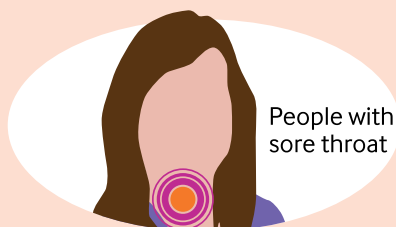


# Corticosteroids for sore throat

## Population



This recommendation applies to almost all patients with sore throat:



- Children 5 years and older and all adults
- Severe and not severe sore throat
- Emergency and primary care settings
- Patients with a viral or bacterial sore throat
- Patients who receive immediate or deferred antibiotics

However the recommendation is **not** applicable to patients with:



- Infectious mononucleosis
- Immunocompromising conditions
- Sore throat following surgery or intubation
- Children under 5 years old

## Comparison

### Short course of steroids

1–2 doses of oral Dexamethasone (or equivalent dose of alternative corticosteroid) + standard care

Adults: 10 mg  
Children: 0.6 mg per kg

+

Standard care

+ Analgesics

+/- Antibiotics

or

### No steroids

Standard clinical care, which typically includes analgesics, and may include antibiotics

Standard care

+ Analgesics

+/- Antibiotics

Favours steroids

Favours no steroids

Strong

Weak

Weak

Strong

We suggest short course of steroids. Discuss with patients in shared decision making.

## Comparison of benefits and harms

Favours steroids

No important difference

Favours no steroids

Events per 1000 people

Evidence quality

Complete pain resolution (24 hrs)	224	124 more	100	★★★★ Moderate
Complete pain resolution (48 hrs)	608	183 more	425	★★★★ High

Mean time to resolution (hours)

Complete pain resolution	33.0	11.1 fewer	44.0	★★★ Low
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Events per 1000 people

Symptom recurrence or relapse	34	No important difference	65	★★★★ Moderate
Antibiotics prescription	468	96 fewer	564	★★★★ Low

### Preferences and values

The panel believes that there is a great variability on how much reduction in pain severity or time to complete pain resolution each patient would consider important. Shared decision making may help establish what matters most to each patient.

### Serious adverse events

One-dose administration of steroids is not likely to cause serious adverse events. Very low quality evidence exists for extremely rare but serious adverse effects following higher doses or longer courses of steroids (up to 30 days).

### Multiple doses

Risks may outweigh benefits when cumulative doses of steroids are given for multiple episodes of sore throat. To mitigate this issue, clinicians could administer the medication in office if possible, or prescribe only one dose per visit.

# Current guidance for treatment of patients with sore throat

Table 1. Current guidance for treatment of patients with sore throat

	Ibuprofen	Paracetamol	Antibiotics	Corticosteroids	
				For adults	For children
EBM guidelines	Supportive	Supportive	Conditionally	Supportive	Not applicable
SIGN6	Supportive	Supportive	Conditionally	Not supportive	No comment
NHG12	Supportive	Supportive	Conditionally	Not recommended	No comment
BC guidelines <sup>13</sup>	No comment	No comment	Against	No comment	No comment
UpToDate	Against	No comment	No comment	Supportive	No comment